DOMINICAN REPUBLIC BASEBALL: A CASE STUDY OF A
MAJOR LEAGUE BASEBALL TEAM'S ACADEMY


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# Abstract

The workforce of Major League Baseball (MLB) has changed considerably over the last half century. While the United States was once the sole provider of MLB talent, the Dominican Republic, Venezuela, Puerto Rico, and Japan have over the past 25 years provided new talent on a more global scale. This global talent search has led to the migration of talented players away from their countries of origin and to MLB academies for talent development in the Dominican Republic. While the process of the discovery of the population of talented players and academy creation has been explored in both popular and academic literature, an analysis of the pre-migration processes experienced by teams and players in these academies had yet to be undertaken. Therefore, the purpose of this dissertation was to examine a MLB academy in the Dominican Republic to determine their elements of the talent selection process for players entering the professional baseball system, understand the reasons these players choose to pursue a MLB career, and identify what difficulties players believed and administrators anticipated would be challenging for them upon player migration.

A case study method was used where field notes and in-depth interviews were conducted with players and administrators. In addition to these interviews, participant-observations were carried out and organizational documents were utilized to examine the talent identification and athlete migration questions of interest.

This dissertation presents three papers that provide a greater understanding of the new global workforce in baseball. The first paper examined the methods used in identifying talented Dominican Republic baseball players. This analysis of talent identification methods also included ways an MLB team modified or altered their

methods to address differences between the United States and the Dominican. A theoretical framework including globalization, in the form of glocalization, and talent identification, comprising the dimensions of physical skills, technical skills, cognitive-perceptual skills, and personal qualities, was used. The study revealed that the MLB team under study modified their talent identification processes and separated the four talent identification categories into teachable and natural abilities.

The second paper identified the reasons Dominican baseball players chose to pursue a career in MLB. Previous research solely focused on post-migration analysis and did examine athletes who were in the pre-migration phase. The framework used in this analysis included the sets of motivations identified as mercenaries, ambitionists, and nomadic cosmopolitans. The findings showed that, in addition to these three motivations, the motivations of altruists and lost boys were outlined as new motivations for players seeking to migrate. Additionally, it was suggested that the previously defined motivation of settlers was largely post-hoc conventions due to the uncertain nature of a player's potential ability.

The third paper investigated perceived issues that Dominican players would encounter during their initial migration period to the United States. The framework guiding this evaluation was based on previous research with elite level international athletes and focused on the three core areas of 1) challenges in a new community; 2) challenges in a new culture, but outside of sport, and; 3) challenges in sport contexts. The challenges expected to be encountered were explained by both the players who would be migrating and the baseball administrators who have either witnessed and/or experienced this migration themselves. The players and administrators each identified similar issues

(e.g., cultural adjustments, language barrier); however, each group also identified and

stressed different issues (e.g., players focused on the language barrier and administrators

focused on the cultural adjustment). Issues that administrators may not have been

concerned with might negatively impact players' performances and experiences.

The implications of the talent identification research lies with the difficulties in creating

singular models of talent identification and how those difficulties are exacerbated when

attempting to implement these models on different populations. In regards to athlete

migration, the current research supported previous research, but also uncovered two new

motivations, altruist and lost boys, to provide a new direction for future research. Finally,

the migration difficulties anticipated by both the players and administrators were similar

and could serve as an instrument for team administrators seeking to adequately prepare

Dominican players for migration to the United States as well as aid in program

development that can help players manage new stressors of playing in the United States.

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# CHAPTER 1

## Introduction

The need for Major League Baseball (MLB) organizations to adapt to the increasingly global nature of their workforce has been well documented (Breton & Villegas, 1999; Jamail, 2008; Kelly, 2006; Klein, 1991; 2006; Kurlansky, 2010; Marcano & Fidler, 2002; Wendell, 2003). Breton & Villegas (1999), Klein (1991), and Marcano & Fidler (2002) examined the treatment of players in MLB facilities operated outside of the United States and found various human rights issues. Jamail (2008), Kelly (2006), Klein (2006), Kurlansky (2010), and Wendell (2003) addressed how the growth of baseball as an international sport altered the participant structure to include an increasing international talent component. This international expansion of the workforce led to the creation of MLB academies in the Dominican Republic. These academies are institutions where MLB teams provide room and board and develop young players and are one example of how MLB has sought to increase their talent pool through player development. In this dissertation, I sought to gain an understanding of migration and the expansion of MLB's global workforce through the context of a MLB team's Dominican baseball academy.

While previous research documented part of the international aspect of baseball, it provided either an outsider's perspective (i.e. Breton & Villegas, 1999; Kelly, 2006; Klein, 2006; Kurlansky, 2010; Wendell, 2003) or focused on a specific player's perspective (Marcano & Fidler, 2002). To build on these previous works, I conducted a case study (Yin, 2009) on a Dominican academy and its players' experiences about the reasons why they wanted to pursue a career in MLB and the difficulties they anticipated

encountering once they migrated to the United States. Additionally, team administrators'

perspectives on talent identification and perceived migration difficulties were evaluated.

This dissertation is organized into three papers that addressed the global workforce from

its initial stage of gaining entry to the potential migrant pool (talent identification)

through the decision-making process (migration rationale) and to the point of imminent

migration (potential difficulties).

The first paper focused on a MLB team's methods of talent identification.

Specifically how or if these identification methods were modified or developed to address

circumstances in the Dominican Republic that were used in the United States. Given the

challenges in identifying MLB talent, teams have focused on the task of growing the

global workforce (Wendell, 2003). MLB teams have largely focused on identifying talent

in the Dominican Republic and Venezuela, and to some degree from Japan and Puerto

Rico (Klein, 2006; Marcano & Fidler, 2002). For example, the percentage of Latino

players in MLB on opening day rosters increased from 13 percent of all players in 1990

to 28.3 percent of all players in 2010 (Burns-Ortiz, 2011). The growth of Latin players in

MLB has also led to the expansion of MLB academies in the Dominican Republic, with

all 32 teams operating an academy in the Dominican (Kurlansky, 2010).

Signing Dominican players to professional contracts is less expensive than

signing players from the United States (Gregory, 2010; Klein, 1991). The ability to sign

these players to contracts at a younger age than players born in the United States (Klein,

1991, 2006;  Marcano & Fidler, 2002) makes investing in Dominican talent an intelligent

economic decision for teams (Gennaro, 2007). While the reduced cost of signing players

has little impact on talent identification, other than the financial benefits, the ability to

sign players at a younger age has the potential to impact talent identification ability and

procedures (Morris, 2000; Williams & Reilly, 2000). Additionally, despite the numerous

sport specific studies (see: Auweele, Cuyper, Mele, & Rzewnicki, 1993; Falk, Lidor,

Lander, & Lang, 2004; Geisler & Leith, 1997; Morris, 2000; Prescott, 1996; Regnier,

Salmela, & Russell, 1993; Reilly et al., 2000; Schroth, 1995; Williams & Reilly, 2000)

that attempt to determine scientific measures that identify talented competitors, none to

date have provided predictive qualities desired of such a model. The only notion of talent

identification that is widely accepted is that success is largely dependent on a host of

external factors, including opportunities to practice, remaining injury-free, the quality and

receptiveness of coaching provided during developmental years, and various personal,

social and cultural factors (i.e. Bloom, 1985; Durand-Bush & Salmela, 2002; Reilly et al.

2000).  Thus, MLB teams, and other professional sporting franchises, long ago resorted

to using expert observers (scouts) to help identify the best prospects at the earliest

possible age and develop them through their systems (Gennaro, 2007; MLS, 2006).

Given the importance of expert observers in MLB talent identification and the

global nature of the MLB workforce, the purpose of this paper was to identify the

methods MLB teams use to identify talent and to determine if talent identification

measures, even within the same sport, must be modified to meet the demands of a global

sporting environment. To gain an understanding of how a MLB team identifies talent I

drew from Vrljic & Mallet's (2008) theory, of talent identification that encompasses four

major dimensions: 1) physical skills; 2) technical skills; 3) cognitive-perceptual skills,

and; 4) personal qualities. Using this framework I explored what specific skills and

abilities a MLB team's administrators were attempting to identify in predicting

performance in an elite league. Additionally, the theory of globalization called "glocalization" by Giulianotti & Robertson (2007) assisted in further separating the relevant talent identification elements. Giulianotti & Robertson (2007) framework helped to understand how the talent identification mechanisms utilized by MLB teams in the United States were modified to meet the demands of the environment in the Dominican Republic. Thus, the Vrljic & Mallett (2008) talent identification and Giulianotti & Robertson (2007) globalization framework served as concurrent frameworks for analysis.

The second paper focused on the reasons Dominican baseball players chose to pursue a career in MLB. This research adds to the literature by providing much needed background information on this migrant workforce and its motivations. Baseball is the number one sport of Dominican youth and pursuing a career in baseball to the detriment of their studies and any other career avenue is very common (Breton& Villegas, 1999; Klein, 1989, 1991, 2006; Marcano & Fidler, 2002). While the monetary benefits play a role in the decision of many Dominican players to pursue baseball as a career (Breton & Villegas, 1999; Klein, 1991, 2006; Marcano & Fidler, 2002; Regalado, 2000), to say unequivocally that money is the only reason for a player to desire to migrate to the United States to play professional baseball presents a one-dimensional view of a complex decision process. Understanding migration motives prior to the migration takes place also allows for a greater understanding of a player's motivations and does not allow post-migration success or failure to impose alternative motivations on a player's initial migration decision. While previous research has addressed the rationale of athlete migration (see: Darby, 2007; Lanfranchi & Taylor, 2001; Maguire & Pearton, 2000a; McGovern, 2000; Molnar, 2006; Magee & Sugden, 2002; Mason, 1994; Taylor, 2007),

all were conducted post-hoc, and largely with successful athletes with extended careers

allowing the potential for athletes to substitute current benefits of the migration decision

for an initial rationale which may no longer be a primary benefit.

The final paper provides a detailed account of perceived issues that Dominican

players will encounter during their initial migration period as explained by both the

players who will migrate to the United States and the baseball administrators who have

either witnessed and/or experienced this migration themselves. Scant research has been

conducted on the difficulties that migrant athletes encounter once they migrate to their

new homelands (Agergaard, 2008; Bale, 1991; Bourke, 2002; Stead & Maguire, 2000;

Ridinger & Pastore, 2000; Schinke, Yukelson, Bartolacci, Battochio, & Johnstone, 2011;

Weedon, 2011) and to date no research has examined players' anticipation of the

difficulties they would face prior to their migration. The majority of athlete migration

research has been conducted post-hoc and not pre-migration (see Bale, 1991; Bale &

Maguire, 1994; Bromberger, 1994; Darby, 2007; Lanfranchi & Taylor, 2001; Magee &

Sugden, 2002; Maguire & Pearton, 2000a; Maguire & Pearton, 2000b; McGovern, 2000;

Miller & Redhead, 1994; Moorhouse, 1994; Schinke et al., 2011; Taylor, 2007), allowing

the post-migration experiences to potentially influence pre-migration expectations and

rationale.

While studying the difficulties encountered by migrant athletes after their

migration is necessary to acquire a representative picture of their experiences, studying

the anticipated challenges is necessary as well. Acknowledging the expectations of the

players and administrators allows those developing and creating cultural awareness

programs for the players to alleviate some perceptions or concerns, inform players of

unsuspected challenges, and educate the players on the handling of both expected and unexpected difficulties. The theory of migration difficulties outlined by Schinke et al. (2011) guided this research due to its inclusion of elite level athletes from various countries coming to the United States. Schinke et al. (2011) outlined three main areas of difficulty, which included challenges in a new community, challenges in a new culture, but outside of sport, and challenges in sport contexts.

In sum, due to the increasing number of players from the Dominican Republic entering MLB (Burns-Ortiz, 2011) it is instructive to determine the elements of the selection process that a MLB team uses to choose which players enter the professional baseball system, understand the reasons these players choose to pursue the MLB career option, and define what difficulties the believe and administrators anticipate will be challenging for them upon their migration. Analyzing the various elements of the player migration process from its initial stage of gaining entry to the potential migrant pool (talent identification) through the decision-making process (migration rationale) and to the point of imminent migration (potential difficulties) we are able to learn more about this growing global workforce, about which "very little is known about … their backgrounds, their experiences, and the impact of their careers on their homeland and their host societies" (Arbena, 1994, p. 103).  This new knowledge will allow teams to potentially analyze, modify, and develop new talent identification measures for the Dominican Republic, understand the intrinsic and extrinsic motivations that drive their players, and create and implement programs to address the challenges players and administrators believe the players will face upon their migration to the United States.

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# CHAPTER 2

## Research Design

Case studies allow researchers to retain the characteristics of real-life events through the accumulation of information about a person, group, or environment to assist in the understanding of how a phenomenon operates (Berg, 2001; Yin, 2009). An intrinsic case study (Stake 2005) approach was chosen for these studies because the purpose of this research was to: 1) understand how a MLB team identifies talent in the Dominican Republic and to determine if talent identification measures, even within the same sport, must be modified to meet the demands of a global sporting environment; 2) understand why Dominican baseball players want to migrate to the United States, and 3) detail perceived issues that Dominican players will encounter during their initial migration period. Stake (2005) argued that an intrinsic case study design assists in gaining a better understanding of a particular case because the case in all its "particularity and ordinariness" (p. 445) is of interest, not because the case represents other cases or because it illustrates a particular trait. The chosen MLB team's academy and its players was a logical case to use to examine the elements and fluidity of the talent identification process, the rationale for migration, and the perceived difficulties with migration.

Case study research is usually ethnographic, clinical, participant-observation based, or otherwise described as "in the field" (Gerring, 2004; Yin, 2009). Case studies are also "an intensive study of a single unit for the purpose of understanding a larger class of similar units" (Gerring, 2004, p. 342) which means an understanding of the research will assist in future similarly designed and constructed research. The case study approach also is clear in it acceptance of multiple realities (Stake, 2005) allowing for the

differences in talent identification methodologies and opinions, differences in migration

rationale, and differences in opinions between the players, administrators, and players

and administrators in regards to perceived difficulties. Stake (2005) noted that while

researchers should enter the setting expecting certain issues to be prominent, they should

also be open to discovering that pre-conceived notions may be false and issues initially

thought to be trivial could become prominent. Thus, one additional reason for the use of

the case method was the flexibility of the approach and its ability to evolve in the act of

research and writing (Stake, 2005).

**Research Site**

The research site for this study was conducted at a MLB team's academy in the

Dominican Republic. All 30 MLB teams currently operate an academy in the Dominican

Republic that competes in the Dominican Summer League (Minor League Baseball,

2010). The Dominican Summer League (DSL) and its counterpart in Venezuela are the

lowest levels of professional baseball that are affiliated with MLB member clubs (Klein,

2006). Teams in the Dominican Republic were mostly comprised of players between the

ages of 16-22 years who were citizens of either the Dominican Republic or Venezuela.

Players in the DSL may also come from other nations (i.e. Curacao, Mexico, Panama,

Honduras) which are not subject to the MLB draft, but the majority of the players were

from the Dominican and Venezuela (Breton & Villegas, 1999; Fainaru, 2001; Klein,

1991, 2006). The DSL season consisted of 72 games that were played between May and

August. At the time of data collection, there were five divisions in the DSL, Boca Chica

North, Boca Chica South, Boca Chica Baseball City, Santo Domingo North, and San

Pedro de Macoris.

All of the MLB academies in the Dominican are located on the southern part of the island. The location of the academies on the southern part of the island is for two reasons. First, the majority of talented players from the Dominican were from cities on the southern end of the island (i.e. Bani, San Pedro de Macoris, Santo Domingo) (Kurlansky, 2010). Second, the Santo Domingo airport, which is the largest airport in the Dominican Republic, is located on the southern portion of the island. The proximity of the airport to the academies allows talent evaluators and coaches the opportunity to travel into and out of the Dominican much easier than if the academies were in the central region of the country (Kurlansky, 2010).

The academy site was part of a larger complex that housed several other MLB DSL teams. The facility was leased by the team and the home of their DSL team. Not all teams leased their academies, but most did (Klein, 2006). Many of the academies were also clustered close together to allow teams to reduce costs on travel expenses. In this complex, each team had their own academy grounds, fields, and living quarters. The academies within the larger complex only shared the same entrances to the primary academy road, much like houses on a street are independent, yet share a common access road. The main entrance was on a major thoroughfare in Boca Chica. The road was defined as major since it was fully and completely paved and leads to the capital city of Santo Domingo. This entrance was set back approximately a quarter mile from the main road and can be easily missed. The rear entrance to the academy village was off an unpaved side street that ran through a typical Dominican neighborhood.

A typical Dominican academy consists of a housing area, dining area, locker room, weight room, restroom facilities, and at least one full and one half baseball field,

which consists of a full infield with about 15 feet of grass beyond the infield dirt. The housing area is either a long military bunker-style or several separate rooms with multiple bunk beds in each room. The dining area consists of a cooking area and tables and chairs where the players eat their meals (Klein, 1991, 2006). The academy in which the research was conducted had two floors. Player housing, which consisted of several bedrooms with three to four bunk beds each, and restrooms, were on the second floor. The dining room, locker room, and weight room were on the first floor.

The players in the DSL were all signed to contracts by the MLB team that operated their academy, or parent club. The players were paid varying amounts for their service. On the team that I studied, players were paid between five hundred and six hundred dollars per month depending on years of service (first year = $500, second year = $550, third year = $600). The players were only compensated during the season (MLB Team Document, 2007). The players received signing bonuses ranging from $3,000 to $100,000. However, unlike in the United States where an agent's percentage is usually between five to seven percent, the street agents (referred to as buscones, in the Dominican) typically obtained between 10 and 25 percent of the players' bonus and received upwards of 50 percent (Breton & Villegas, 1999; Gregory, 2010; Klein, 1991, 2006; Marcano & Fidler, 2002). Based on a polling of the players in the academy, the average buscone took 33 percent of the players' signing bonus.

The coaches and administrators at the Academy were appointed by the staff of the MLB parent club. The coaches and administrators consisted of a Latin American administrator, an on-site/academy administrator, and three coaches. The Latin American administrator managed the various staffing, equipment, and supply needs of the academy.

They also oversaw the on-site administrator who was based at the academy and provided for the day-to-day needs of the staff, players, and academy. The three coaches each had different responsibilities. One coach was a pitching coach, who worked exclusively with the pitchers. The other two were the manager and the hitting coach. Both of these individuals worked with the position players and assisted in teaching the fundamentals of the game. The coaches were also in charge of disciplining the players and maintaining order in the Academy.

The number of coaches was largely dependent on the team. Many teams had more than three coaches; however, no team had less than three. Teams with a greater number of players may have had an additional pitching coach or staff member who worked with the position players. These coaches were generally players who played in the minor leagues in the United States failed to make it at the MLB-level. Often they played in the minor league system of the team that they were currently working for and were identified as potential coaches during their minor league career.

While the focus of life at the academy was baseball and making it to the United States, the daily routine defined life at the academy. During the season, on Monday through Saturday, the pitchers woke up before the rest of the players and began their daily routine. This routine consisted of the pitchers assembling by the left field foul pole for a brief stretch. The team trainer was always present to supervise these activities and was often joined by the pitching coach. Following a traditional sport stretching routine, the pitchers would usually begin their morning run. The speed and distance of the run was based on whether or not a pitcher was a starter or reliever or had pitched or not the previous day. Laps around the field and short distance sprints ruled the majority of these

early morning workouts for the pitchers. The lack of effort by a majority of the players with little comment from any of the coaches or the trainer was the most surprising aspect of these workouts. It appeared that some players gave a reasonable effort, but a lackadaisical attitude seemed to dominate the morning routine. At various points during the season, the pitchers would do drills with hurdles to increase flexibility, develop core strength, and help maintain form when pitching; however, these days were not regular occurrences. The only player that followed a special routine was the scheduled starting pitcher for that day. While he participated in the normal stretches, he would follow a special stretching routine while the other players ran and/or did the hurdle exercises. The goal was not to stress or tire out the day's starting pitcher, but to limber him up in order to have him ready at maximum effectiveness.

Following the pitchers morning routine, the rest of the players would file downstairs for breakfast. The pitchers would sometimes take a brief shower after their workout, but would quickly join their teammates for breakfast in the cafeteria. Breakfast generally consisted of a mix of the following: mangu (or mashed plantains), fried pork chops, hard-boiled and/or fried eggs, fried salami and either fried or sliced cheese. In addition to these options, Mondongo (or stewed tripe) was a common breakfast.

After breakfast, the players were given time to change into their practice clothes and mingle before beginning practice. Practice typically began with the outfielders taking some batting practice (BP) in the batting cages, the pitchers working on their fielding skills or on their elastic band drills, and the infielders working on groundball drills. These drills lasted about 20-30 minutes and then the team would come together and would be addressed by the manager and any of the other coaches or scouts that desired to speak

with them team. Once everyone had spoken, the team began a team stretch, in the outfield lead, by the team trainer.

The stretch was followed by the pitchers either conducting their elastic band drills or beginning their throwing program, the infielders taking BP, and the outfielders working on different fielding drills. Again, these drills typically lasted about 20-30 minutes followed by drills that included all the pitchers, infielders, and outfielders with the manager hitting groundballs and flyballs to the players and incorporating cut-off and base running drills.

Following the team drills, players would change into their game uniforms, eat a light snack and either head to the locker room and prepare for a home game, walk to the opposing team's facility, or board the bus to travel to their game. The game was then played with the players enjoying lunch and a nap after its conclusion. On Monday through Friday, the rest of the day consisted of either weight lifting or English class with players alternating days for each and dinner following that evening's English class or weight lifting. After Saturday games, players were free to do as they wished since no games or practices were held on Sunday. Some players traveled home every weekend, while other remained in the academy the entire summer and others traveled home sporadically throughout the summer.

The players remained at the academy for additional workouts during the off season. The players were given time off every Sunday to travel home during the season, several two-day weekends during the off-season portion of the training schedule, and longer breaks after the initial completion of the season and during the traditional holiday season; however, as previously stated the players were not paid for their non-season

workouts. During this off-season period, they were provided with room, board, and transportation expenses only. Depending on the level of performance, players at the academy stayed for a period of one, two, or three years. Exceptions for a fourth academy year were granted if players made what the Dominican Summer League determined to be significant position change, which included converting from any non-pitching role to a pitcher, a pitcher to a non-pitching position, or from any non-catching position to catcher. The team in this study rarely cut players during the season. They were reluctant to move players from the Dominican to the United States or the United States to the Dominican during the DSL season. Decisions about whether players would be promoted, retained at the DSL-level, or released were made at the season's end.

**Researcher's role**

During this research, I served in both an emic (insider) and etic (outside) roles (Creswell, 1998). I was an insider to the administrators from the United States because I was an American and an outsider because I was not a player personnel administrator. For the Dominican administrators and coaches, I was an insider because I lived in the academy, ate the same food, maintained the same schedule, travelled with the team, and generally, experienced everyday life in the academy with them. I was also an objective viewer since I was not taking part in their baseball activities, but served as an observer and English language instructor. How I managed these roles and the obstacles and advantages these two vantage points provided will be discussed in the following sections.

Regardless of my role in the academy, life in the academy was centered on earning promotion to the United States. While the players knew that success was not guaranteed once they arrived in the United States, they were aware that their MLB

dreams could never be realized until they were first promoted to a minor league team in the United States. While the mundane activities of everyday life (e.g. practice, weight lifting, English class) were abundant in the academy, the overwhelming thought on the players' minds was if they were going to be promoted to the United States at the end of the season or not.

The players knew only a limited number were promoted every year and their performance or lack thereof was a daily concern. During my time in the academy, I was constantly asked, "How did I look today," "Do you think I'm going to the United States next year," and "What did" – insert name of American-based scout or staff member here – "say about me." The players knew I was not a scout, but they also knew that I spoke with the coaches, scouts, and administrators on a daily basis. They also were aware of the fact that I was constantly taking notes, often times asking what I was writing and if I had written anything about them. As noted the main concern was their status in regards to the team and the other players.

In the Dominican, there are three options that are available to the players at the end of the season: 1) promotion to the United States for the following season, the obviously desired option; 2) a return to the Dominican Summer League, not preferred, but represents a chance to eventually attain a spot on a roster of a team in the United States, and; 3) release. Being released quite often meant the end of a player's career. Released players rarely signed with new teams and frequently did not receive any additional signing bonus money if they did (Klein, 1991; Marcano & Fidler, 2001). If one team thought that a player was not talented enough to play in the Dominican Summer League or make a Rookie League roster, most other teams would avoid them, as well.

During my stay in the Dominican, the organization I was studying signed one previously contracted player. This player was a left-handed pitcher, a valuable commodity for any baseball team. However, due to below average performance, a sub-par practice attitude, and substantial off-the-field issues this player was released at the end of the season.

### Technical Considerations

Technical considerations largely help the researcher define the scope of the research they will be able to conduct and the setting in which they will be able to conduct the research (Marshall & Rossman, 2010). Technical considerations that were an issue in this research included negotiating access, deployment of time, degree of the researcher's participation in daily life of the research subjects, time spent in the setting, and disclosure of the research and its nature to the participants. The most critical technical consideration was negotiating access to the academy and assuring that I would be able to have unfettered access to the team and its staff. I contacted several MLB teams in regards to studying their academies in the Dominican Republic. Most of the organizations declined my request, with two organizations agreeing to allow me to study in their academy. The initial decision was to study the team that first responded to me in the affirmative. However, my decision was changed when this team changed their plans of allowing me to study in their academy for a period of several months to only two months. I then pursued the second organization which informed me that I could stay as long as I wished. I decided to accept the offer from the second organization due to the longer period of time I would be able to spend in the academy. Throughout this process, negotiations often stalled when determining the length of time in the academy and what type of access I would be granted.

When access was initially granted and plans were being confirmed in regards to my final arrangements changes were made at the last minute by the team to limit my time in the academy to 45 days. The team stated they needed the bed I would be using for players. Assuming that 45 days would not allow sufficient time for me to conduct my research, I again began contacting other MLB teams seeking access.  I was able to negotiate the access I required to conduct the study in a third site, if I agreed to serve as the team's English Language Coordinator while I was conducting my research. I believed this to be a fair exchange of services for access and agreed to these terms.

Prior to departing for the Dominican Republic and upon my arrival at the team's academy, I fully disclosed to all staff members, coaches, and players in the organization my research. I did not believe that deception would be a beneficial or necessary strategy to gain the information I desired. Since the team did not request to review my notes, interview questions, or an advance copy of my research findings I believed that hiding the research would only add an additional unnecessary burden.

*Positionality*

The majority of my time in the Dominican Republic was focused on conducting my research and designing the daily English classes for the players. Through these two activities I was ever-present in the lives of the players. I woke up when the team did, attended and watched their morning practices, traveled to their games, watched television, talked baseball, ate breakfast, lunch, and dinner with them, in addition to teaching them English. According to Marshall & Rossman (2010), the dimensions of this study would be considered intensive and extensive. I spent seven months in the academy living with the players, coaches, and administrators, and participating in their daily lives.

Rarely would a day go by when I would not have at least a short interaction with every

member of the organization who was based in the Dominican Republic.

The administrators, coaches, and players were accustomed to having a white male

from the United States come to the academy to serve as the English language instructor.

The team had arranged the program similarly in previous years and continued this

practice in subsequent years. As a white male from the United States their familiarity

with this process was a benefit to me, but I needed to develop my own relationships and

understandings of the environment to cultivate quality data. Coming from the United

States (a country of relative privilege) to the Dominican Republic (a country of relative

poverty), I wanted to make sure that my personal interest and background knowledge of

baseball did not "preordain the findings or bias the study" (Marshall & Rossman, 2010, p.

63). I did not want to privilege any preconceptions I may have had or ignore culturally

insensitive remarks made by administrators, coaches, or players to protect individuals

who would become my friends.

My role as the English instructor provided me with an avenue to develop

relationships with the players by facilitating mastery of their faces and encouraging

intimacy with their personalities much more quickly than presenting solely as a

researcher. It may be argued that my position as the English instructor gave me authority

within the academy, but since the players knew I did not make decisions about their

promotion or release this limited my authority to solely the English/cultural class setting.

I also assisted the players at the academy by having the team photocopy an

English/Spanish textbook for each player, a notepad for every player, and writing utensils

to be used in class and when asked for outside of class. This was the first time any of

these accommodations had been provided to the players in the academy. Additionally, since I was present for the promotion or release discussions, I was viewed more as an informed outsider to be questioned for information, progressing to confidant and friend as the season progressed.

The coaches and administrators from the United States and Dominican perceived me as the interested "fly on the wall" always listening to their stories, discussions, and constantly asking questions (e.g. why can players stay 30 days in the academy without signing a contract, what are common issues you must address with the players) to learn about the academy system, their perceptions, and scouting techniques. The Dominican coaches and administrators also saw me as the person who provided English language assistance when they wrote player reports that were sent to the United States, and the person whom they used as an unbiased observer of academy operations that could provide suggestions on improving academy living conditions. The coaches who traveled to the Dominican Republic from the United States saw me as someone they could talk to during their stay. At various points throughout my stay, these coaches, administrators, and scouts came down to the academy to observe the players. At times, I was the only other American and provided an available outlet for conversations and discussions.

The most difficult element of the process was attempting to manage all of these roles without defying the confidence of any of the other groups. If the coaches or scouts had made a criticism of a player I wanted to tell that player, but was obligated not to disclose the information. Conversely, if the administrators who were based in the United States had commented positively on the academy and practice techniques and methods, I did not disclose this information either. I believed that only disseminating positive

information would be as biased as providing only negative information. Providing all of

the information I gleaned from sources to those they were discussing would have soon

left me as a true outsider. Thus, I decided to remain quiet on these issues. I attempted to

eliminate any potential bias I may have had by remaining focused on the research

purpose and maintaining detailed notes from as objective a viewpoint as I could. I

attempted to do this by noting facts of a given situation and not allowing my personal

perception of the coach's or player's talent or personality impact my evaluation of a

given situation.

### *Intrapersonal Considerations*

In qualitative research, building relationships is a key, if not the key, aspect to

obtaining useful and meaningful data (Marshall & Rossman, 2010). The goal in

qualitative research is to establish mutually respectful relationships while not allowing

the personal entanglements and friendships to cloud the researcher's judgment and

impact their ability to see beyond the surface (Wolcott, 2002). In this research, I believe

that the length I spent in the academy allowed me to develop trustful and respectful

relationships with all of the team staff members, coaches, and players. The area that I

believe was most beneficial to the research concerning my relationship with the

administrators was my constant presence and willingness to engage in their off-the-field

activities. I helped write scouting reports, provided information on the MLB season, had

meals, and talked with the administrators at all times and about all types of topics (e.g.

their families and children, their baseball experiences as players and coaches, how long

they had been with the team). Through my continued presence, I established trustful

relationships with almost all of the team's staff and coaches. While some relationships

were stronger and more established than others, I believe I collected accurate and detailed data from all of the subjects and am confident that all those involved will discover pieces of their own experiences in the findings.

*Reciprocity*

Marshall & Rossman (2010) refer to reciprocity by stating, "When people adjust their priorities and routines to help the researcher, or even just tolerate the researcher's presence, they are giving of themselves. The researcher is indebted and should be sensitive to this" (p. 121). I attempted to reciprocate for the opportunity given to me by teaching the English classes to the best of my ability, providing a source for staff members, coaches, and players to bounce ideas off of (e.g. changing practice schedules, requiring specific strength training program information), and listening to the issues and problems that they may have been having. Through fulfilling my role as the English language coordinator, which required two hours of classes Monday through Friday, and serving the role of friend and confidant, I believe that I provided a meaningful and important reciprocation to the team, its coaches, and staff members. Additionally, in my role as English language coordinator, I was the first instructor to ask that the players be provided with a notepad, pencil and book. A typical class included vocabulary focusing on a specific genre (i.e. the grocery store, directions, restaurants), followed by "hot seat" session, with the class concluding with a review of body parts and days of the week. The "hot seat" included one of the players being placed in a chair in front of the class and the other players, and me, asking the seated student questions in English. The seated player would be required to respond as best they could in English. Most players greatly enjoyed the opportunity to both ask questions in English to their teammates and sit in the "hot

seat". The body parts and days of the week were constantly reviewed at the request of the

United States-based administrators who had noted that Dominican players often did not

know the days of the week when they arrived in the United States and had trouble

communicating injured parts of the body to trainers.

*Ethics*

Conducting research in the field presents many ethical questions. The three main

areas that must be addressed according to Dobbert (1982) are: 1) confidentiality, 2)

honesty, and 3) responsibility. Confidentiality addresses the issue of non-disclosure, thus

protecting the participants from any reprisal efforts that could be directed at them if

identities were disclosed. Honesty requires informing the participants in advance about

the goals of the study, the benefits, the burdens, and who will have access to the final

reports (Bogden & Biklen, 1998). Responsibility relates to insuring that the participants

in the study are not negatively impacted by the study (Marshall & Rossman, 2010). To

protect the administrators' identities they were referred to by a randomly assigned

pseudonym and a number ranging between one and thirteen. I conducted each interview

and I believe that I possessed extensive knowledge of talent identification and athlete

migration difficulties given that I had extensively researched the topics prior to my

arrival and had played and watched the sport from an early age. To protect players'

identities they were referred to by a randomly assigned pseudonym, a number ranging

between one and twenty-two. I conducted each interview and I believe that I possessed

extensive knowledge of athlete migration rationale and difficulties given that I had also

extensively researched these topics prior to my arrival. The administrators and players

were also intimately aware of the reasons that I was conducting the research and the

purpose it served for me personally. Ethical considerations were also minimized based on Human Subjects approval (#0703P03764) granted by the University of Minnesota and participants were not exposed to risks that were greater than the benefits they may have received.

**Participants**

Criterion sampling (Patton, 2002) was used in this research as it is advised when the researcher determines specific criterion and uses all cases that fit the established criteria. Sampling for the subsequent three papers included both players and administrators in the Dominican Baseball Academy under study. Administrators who were included in the study all worked directly for the MLB team under study and had witnessed or experienced the migration for the Dominican to the United States. Additionally, all of the administrators had input as to which players were signed to the Dominican Summer League team roster and which players were promoted, retained on the Dominican Summer League team for another season, or released at the end of the year. The list of administrative participants included three Dominican coaches, three American coaches, one Dominican scout, two American scouts, three American administrators/scouts, and one Dominican administrator.

In regards to the players, only team-signed players who were in the academy during my stay were included. Players who left prior to my stay or arrived after were not included in the study due to time and monetary constraints. All 22 of the players who participated in this study were Dominican males between the ages of 17 and 21-years-old and had never visited the United States. Each player was also a signed member of the MLB team I was studying and participated in the 2007 Dominican Summer League and

lived in the academy in which I lived. Fourteen of the 22 players were completing their

second season in the Dominican Summer League with the team under study and eight of

the players were in their first year with the team with one of the eight having previously

played for a different team in the Dominican Summer League. Additional demographic

data on the player participants is available in Table 2-1 and includes position, height,

weight in pounds, batting and throwing hand, age, and the player's first year on the

ballclub.

**Data Collection**

Following a case study design multiple sources of data were collected using both

primary and secondary data sources (Stake, 2005). Primary data was collected through

semi-structured interviews (Fontana & Frey, 2000) and informal conversations (Yin,

2009) with the participants. The interviews served to develop a richer and more complete

picture of the talent identification procedures, athlete migration rationale, and potential

migration difficulties. Secondary data was collected through observations and field notes.

**Informal Conversations.**

Informal conversations (Yin, 2009) with all of the participants were conducted

throughout my stay in the academy. An advantage of conversational interviews is they

allowed for more flexibility during face-to-face contact than semi-structured interviews

(Fontana & Frey, 2000). These conversations were also largely based on occurrences that

were happening at the present time (e.g. a performance in a scrimmage, an administrator

complimenting or dismissing a player during a tryout, players purchasing the apparel of

teams for which they did not play; players talking about what they would do once they

signed a MLB contract). The interviewee was able to relate in real time his thought

process and describe his feelings or thoughts at that given moment without having to recall what ideas about talent identification or migration he was considering at an earlier time. These types of conversations occurred on a regular basis with about six or seven per week and lasted anywhere from a few quick seconds to several hours. While the entire conversations would not be centered on one specific topic, they often helped established a rapport between myself and the administrators or players who would allow for more thoughtful explanations during semi-structured interviews.

**Observations and Field Notes.**

Field notes and participant observations formed the initial data collection, and were a continuing, data source throughout the research. Prior to all interviews and relationships being built, I observed the academy setting and took notes on the activities and events that took place in the academy. I became engaged in the academy community, eating breakfast with the players, observing practices, teaching classes, learning the schedule, watching the games, and participating in all the day-to-day happenings of the academy. The value of field notes, besides helping the researcher recreate the research environment by capturing descriptions of research participants, conversations, and physical surroundings, was that they provided an opportunity for me to record my own reactions towards all of these things, as well as ideas on strategy, personal hunches, or personal feelings with respect to observations (Bogden & Biklen, 1998).

Since the actions of others can be difficult to interpret (Marshall & Rossman, 2010), I used my notes to help construct and/or adjust many of the questions to avoid making assumptions about what I was observing. For example, asking administrators why they dismissed a player from a tryout or asking players why they stayed in the

academy on certain weekends, but went home on others. The field notes and participant

observations initially focused on the practice times, player performances, and comments

directed to me and players by team administrators, as these were the most common and

easily observed elements of the environment. As my relationship with the stakeholders

developed and my familiarity with the surroundings expanded, generating conversations

relevant to the research questions became my focus.

**Internal Documents.**

Internal document collection included the team minor league handbook (MLB

Team, 2007) and roster. The Minor League Handbook provided extensive information on

their minor league player policies, procedures, salary scale, and various other subjects

(e.g. absence policy, benefits, medical issues, housing). The team roster gave height,

weight, birth date, city of residence, along with baseball information including position,

which hand they hit and threw with, and number of years with the organization.

**Data Collection Procedures.**

All interviews were conducted during the Dominican Summer League season.

Using the interview guide, semi-structured interviews were all recorded with a digital

recorder and were 20 to 102 minutes in length. All of the semi-structured interviews with

the administrators were conducted in English. All interviews with the players were

conducted in Spanish. All interviews for both parties were conducted at the Dominican

academy. Semi-structured interviews did not commence until late July after I had

established sufficient rapport with the administrators and players. During this process, I

attempted to remain friendly, but focused on the subject matter, and established a non-

judgmental tone that I believed encouraged interactive conversation (Ellis & Bochner, 2000).

Informal conversations, which were noted in the researcher's field notes, took place beginning in February 2007 and continued through August 2007. The informal conversations, which consisted of me talking to individuals or a small group of individuals (usually three or less), were often conducted with administrators during team practice sessions and games when the majority of administrators had free time. These same conversations with players were often conducted after team practice sessions and games when players had free time. These informal conversations were not digitally recorded and could range anywhere from two minutes to multiple hours. However, they were recorded in a notebook at the time or on my computer upon my return to my room, as constant deliberate note-taking during informal conversations was not a desired method. I attempted to document the relevant parts of the conversations to the best of my ability although recall and writing speed meant that not every detail of these conversations was noted. The semi-structured and informal conversations were used to help achieve the most accurate representation of the phenomenon as possible (Bogden & Bilken, 1998).

Field notes were recorded on a daily basis during my stay at the academy from January 31, 2007 through August 23, 2007. Notes were recorded in relation to administrators' interpretations of talent identification and players' feelings and desires about wanting to play professional baseball in the United States. Conversations I had during the practices and games with players and club personnel were also included in my notebook as it was perpetually in my hands. Repetitive topics or occurrences were

initially explained on multiple occasions, but were explained in lesser detail after being noted as the months progressed.

**Data Preparation**

The semi-structured interviews were conducted in English and Spanish. All interview data was downloaded onto a secure personal computer and transcribed into a word document format. To determine the accuracy of the transcripts, I reviewed each transcript while listening to the corresponding interview. Field notes and observations were written in English and transcribed into a word document each day with the date recorded along with that day's notes and observations. To provide an accurate depiction of what the administrators and players said, while also allowing for a more polished read for the final product, minor edits were made as needed and verbal tics were largely removed from the final texts. Internal documents were stored in a binder and described in my field notes on the day they were received. If the option was available, photo copies of these items were made to ensure the documents would be available at the end of the research process.

**Data Analysis**

Neuman (2003) described the process of data analysis as a means for looking for patterns to explain the goal of the studied phenomena. The analysis of data used responses from the players and administrators, observational field data, and internal documents. From these sources, emerging themes were developed, categorized and coded.

During the data analysis process, interview transcripts were transcribed verbatim by the author. To determine accuracy, the transcripts were reviewed by the author by

listening to each interview while reading transcriptions. Minor edits were made by the author as needed and verbal tics (i.e. you know) were largely removed from the final texts. This was done to provide an accurate depiction of what the administrator said while also allowing for a more polished read for the final product.

Following the transcription process, the data analysis was guided by the use of the thematic coding process described by Boyatzis (1998). Boyatzis (1998) explained that thematic codes are generated in three different ways: "(a) theory driven, (b) prior data or prior research driven, and (c) inductive (i.e., from the raw data) or data driven" (p. 29). For the included papers, themes were developed in two of the three ways. The data was initially coded for in an inductive manner where the interviews, field notes and observations, and internal documents were analyzed for elements relating to the talent identification criteria, player migration rationale, and difficulties and challenges expected from migration. In this process, different themes were identified and grouped into categories (i.e. teachable, competition, language, etc.) and references to these items were placed in the appropriate categories. After the inductive coding was complete, the framework for each article was used to group the existing data categories into the a priori categories. During this process, I looked for specific cases that illustrated themes and made comparisons and contrasts between these themes (Neuman, 2003). Finally, the categories were determined and the best examples of the categories were selected to illustrate and represent each category.

**Trustworthiness**

The basic question regarding trustworthiness in qualitative research is being able to persuade an audience that the discoveries made in the investigation are worthy of the

attention of others in the field (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). In this study, four standards of

trustworthiness were sought: credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability

(Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Credibility is established by prolonged engagement in the field,

persistent observation, use of multiple sources (types of information and ways of

obtaining the same information), and the use of multiple methods and multiple theories

(Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Transferability can be achieved through thick description

allowing the readers to identify the elements of setting and the context in which the

inquiry was conducted to develop an understating of how applicable the findings are to

their own settings (Patton, 2002). When establishing dependability, the various steps of

the study, including the techniques used for analysis, are evaluated (Lincoln & Guba,

1985). The auditor determines whether the process and analytical tools that were used to

conduct the research was appropriate and whether they were used in the appropriate

manner (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Confirmability is maintaining a record of the research

process, including, but not limited to, maintaining copies of all taped interviews and

discussions, notes from interviews and discussions, and hard copies of all transcriptions.

The achievement of each standard of trustworthiness is detailed below.

Credibility was adhered to by 1) engagement in the field for a duration of

approximately six months, 2) frequent discourse with the players over a range of

pertinent topics, and 3) utilization of multiples sources of data collection. Credibility was

also established through my ability to communicate with both the administrators and the

players in their native tongues. This also assisted in my gaining the trust of the players, as

I showed my willingness to connect with them through their language. However, this

trust may have been mitigated by my position within the academy and led to players and

administrators to provide either socially desirable or inauthentic answers to questions in

order to protect themselves from perceived organizational retaliation.

Transferability was created by including quotes from the administrators and

players throughout the project and descriptions of their thoughts and rationale. I

attempted to provide sufficient background and detail to permit the understanding of the

setting and the applicability of the findings to the readers own setting. Dependability and

confirmability were accomplished through a "properly managed" audit (Lincoln & Guba,

1985). In this case, regular contact with my advisor about the theoretical and

methodological elements of the study assisted in creating dependable data.

Confirmability was established through the maintenance of a proper record of the

research elements (i.e. field notes, interviews). These records will be maintained and may

be available upon request.

Triangulation of the research data can also be used to enhance "trustworthiness"

(Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Patton (2002) noted that triangulation adds to the accuracy and

credibility of the findings through criteria such as "truth value" and plausibility of

findings, credibility, impartiality, and independence of judgment, confirmability,

consistency and dependability of data, and explainable inconsistencies. Denzin (1978)

also identified four basic types of triangulation: 1) data triangulation – the use of a variety

of data sources; 2) investigator triangulation – the use of several researchers; 3) theory

triangulation – the use of multiple perspectives to interpret the data; 4) methodological

triangulation – the use of multiple methods to study a problem. Trustworthiness in this

study was enhanced through data triangulation. Data triangulation occurred through the

use of interviews with multiple individuals, the recording of field notes and observations, and the use of internal documents.

**Table 2-1: Player Demographic Information**

| Player # | Position | HT | WT | B/T | Age | FYOB |
|----------|----------|--------|-----|-----|-----|------|
| Player 1 | SP | 6'0" | 166 | R/R | 20 | 2006 |
| Player 2 | SP | 6'3" | 165 | R/R | 18 | 2006 |
| Player 3 | RP | 6'0" | 173 | R/R | 20 | 2006 |
| Player 4 | RP | 6'0" | 165 | L/L | 21 | 2006 |
| Player 5 | SP | 6'2" | 218 | R/R | 19 | 2006 |
| Player 6 | RP | 6'1" | 165 | R/R | 20 | 2006 |
| Player 7 | SP/RP | 6'1" | 160 | L/L | 20 | 2006 |
| Player 8 | SP | 5'11" | 150 | L/L | 17 | 2007 |
| Player 9 | SP | 6'0" | 155 | R/R | 18 | 2006 |
| Player 10 | RP | 6'3" | 190 | R/R | 19 | 2007 |
| Player 11 | SP/RP | 6'1" | 175 | R/R | 20 | 2006 |
| Player 12 | RP | 6'5" | 216 | L/L | 19 | 2007 |
| Player 13 | RP | 6'4" | 200 | R/R | 21 | 2006 |
| Player 14 | RP | 6'1" | 165 | R/R | 19 | 2006 |
| Player 15 | C/1B | 5'10" | 180 | R/R | 18 | 2007 |
| Player 16 | 3B | 6'0" | 186 | R/R | 17 | 2007 |
| Player 17 | SS/2B | 5'9" | 145 | R/R | 18 | 2006 |
| Player 18 | C/1B | 6'0" | 184 | R/R | 19 | 2006 |
| Player 19 | OF | 6'0" | 185 | R/R | 19 | 2007 |
| Player 20 | OF | 5'10" | 162 | R/R | 21 | 2006 |
| Player 21 | OF/3B | 6'2" | 185 | R/R | 17 | 2007 |
| Player 22 | OF | 6'1" | 175 | R/R | 19 | 2006 |

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**CHAPTER 3**
**Paper 1**
**Prospect or Suspect:**
**A Case Study of the Talent Identification Process of a**
**Major League Baseball Team in the Dominican Republic**

The economic benefits for a Major League Baseball (MLB) team being able to

recruit talented players and develop them to their full potential have been well argued

(Gennaro, 2007; Lewis, 2003; Livingstone, 2009). Ohlendorf (as cited in Kurkijan, 2009)

found that the internal rate of return on signing bonuses for the top 100 MLB draft

selections from 1989 – 1993 was 60 percent. By achieving a compounding 60 percent

rate of return on players selected in the draft MLB teams turn a $1 investment into $1.60

after one year and $2.56 after two, and so forth. Therefore, despite many drafted players

do not reach the major leagues and fail to yield this rate of return, the return on

investment is worth the risk (Kurkjian, 2009).  Efficient talent identification processes

lowers the cost of winning games by creating rosters that are comprised with lower-

priced, pre-free agency players than the competitive bidding process that is free agency

(Gennaro, 2007).

The financial gains associated with early development of baseball talent have led

to the institution of MLB academies as training grounds for Dominican and Venezuelan

talent (Zimmer, 2005). MLB academies are baseball training institutions based in the

Dominican Republic and Venezuela where MLB teams train, house, and feed young

Dominican and Venezuelan players who have signed to professional contracts (Klein,

1991). In the Dominican Republic[1] and Venezuela MLB teams can sign players at

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[1] In this dissertation the terms Dominican and Dominican Republic will be used interchangeably to refer to
the Dominican Republic.

younger ages than in the United States and often with signing bonuses that are much

lower than in the United States, Canada, and Puerto Rico (Gregory, 2010; Klein, 1991a;

Marcano & Fidler, 2002; Quinn & Fainaru-Wada, 2008). Players born in the United

States, Canada and Puerto Rico are all subject to the MLB draft and are only eligible to

sign with the team that has drafted them (MLB.com, 2012). In contrast, players from

outside of these three nations (e.g. the Dominican Republic and Venezuela) are not

subject to the rules and restrictions imposed by the MLB draft and are able to offer their

services to any of the 30 MLB teams (Gregory, 2010; Klein, 1991; Quinn & Fainaru-

Wada, 2008). The ability to sign players to smaller bonuses and receive a greater rate of

return than on draft eligible players has created an environment where all 30 MLB teams

operate baseball training facilities (academies) in the Dominican Republic (Klein, 1991a,

2006; Zimmer, 2005).

Studying the perspective rates of return on signed non-American/Canadian

players, MLB teams have quickly recognized the benefits of globalizing their player

identification and development systems to include baseball playing nations that were not

covered by the MLB draft. Klein (1994) compared the MLB Dominican baseball

academies to the operations of the nearby sugar refineries, "… [in the Dominican] raw

materials are obtained cheaply, locally refined (at a reduced cost) and shipped abroad;

expect that in the case of academies it is young men who are procured and processed

rather than sugar cane" (p. 194). In either example, the Dominican commodity (player or

sugar) is largely produced to be sold for foreign consumption.

A cursory analysis reveals that in 2010, 1525 players were selected in the MLB

draft with 940 of those players signing contracts (MLB.com, 2010). MLB teams spent

approximately $194 million on signing bonuses for those players (Baseball America,

2010), averaging out to approximately $206,000 per player. In comparison, the average

signing bonus for players in the Dominican Republic, while increasing from an average

of below $30,000 in 2004 to slightly less than $100,000 in 2009, is still less than half of

what the average draft eligible player can expect to earn (Gregory, 2010; Quinn &

Fainaru-Wada, 2008). An outside observer may see the significant increases in signing

bonuses for Dominican players and assume that a level bonus system between drafted

players and Dominican signees is approaching, but this would be a false assumption. In

2009, only 396 Dominican players were signed by MLB teams (Gregory, 2010). If a

similar number of draft eligible players were considered the difference in signing bonus

money would be substantial. In 2010, 298 players from the first 10 rounds of the MLB

draft signed contacts. Those 298 contracts resulted in over $165 million. On average,

each drafted player from the United States, Canada, and Puerto Rico received $550,000

or more than five times the bonus paid to the average Dominican player (Baseball

America, 2010). While the inclusion of an additional 98 signed players from the draft

would lower the average signing bonus paid to drafted players from the $550,000 total,

this sum would still be at least $416,666 for the 398 players, even if the remaining 98

United States, Canadian, and Puerto Rican players did not receive any signing bonus

money. Thus, the average drafted player received a signing bonus more than four times

greater than the average Dominican signee.

The economic benefit for MLB teams to sign and develop talent in the Dominican

is readily apparent. If talent can be procured in the Dominican at a rate that is four to five

times less expensive than similarly talented players who are draft eligible it would be

foolhardy for MLB teams not to try to export a portion of their talent procurement processes to the Dominican Republic. In this sense, MLB would be similar to a manufacturing company that manufactures their product overseas for less than they could produce the same product in the United States and then imports the product for American consumers to purchase.

The problem with system of talent procurement is that talent identification processes, in contrast to sugar or textile production, provide unpredictable results. Players are not products and individuals that may show an ability to perform exceptionally well against their peer group at the age of 16, may not be able to perform similarly against that same peer group at the age of 21. Identification and selection of talented baseball players is as much an art as it is a science (Verducci, 2009). While many advocates of the Bill James statistical revolution[2] (Lewis, 2003 may claim that the MLB selection process is moving towards the analysis of detailed statistics, they would be correct insofar as they are discussing players who have recorded statistics against a reliable standard of competition. These statistical measures would therefore be impossible to use when it comes to identifying talent in the Dominican Republic. The reason for this error is that while non-professional United States-based players compete in highly regulated systems (e.g. high school, Amateur Athletic Union, and college) where relatively accurate statistics are recorded and level of competition can, to some extent, be extrapolated prior

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[2] The Bill James statistical revolution refers to the acceptance of advanced statistical measures of performance in baseball performance which was initially championed by Bill James, the current senior advisor of baseball operations for the Boston Red Sox, and places significant value on past performance and how those performances will dictate future performance.

to a team drafting a player into its minor league (farm) system, no such equivalent system exists for Dominican players.

Some may claim that the Dominican academies serve the purpose of identifying talented Dominican players (Breton, 2000; Breton & Villegas, 1999), but the fact is that players who have signed with a MLB team to play in their academy and Dominican Summer League team have already been identified as talented and signed professional contracts (Klein, 1991); therefore, these players are part of an MLB teams' expenses through signing bonus and salaries, whereas players in high school, AAU, and college have not cost the teams anything in terms of a signing bonus or salary. The statistical analyses (e.g. WAR[3], OBP[4], WHIP[5]) utilized in many MLB contract negotiations (Lewis, 2003) may assist evaluators in determining which players to promote, retain, or release once they enter the professional baseball system, but they do not provide any meaningful measure in determining if a player should be selected to enter a Dominican baseball academy.

Whist talent identification has been well researched (e.g. Durand-Bush & Salmela, 2002; Kerrane, 1989; Reilly, Williams, Neville & Franks, 2000), the accurate prediction of talent requires further research. Through the measurement of physiological and psychological criteria such as $VO_2$ max, sensation-seeking, muscle strength, somatotype, speed, personality, etc. researchers (see: Auweele, Cuyper, Mele, &

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[3] WAR means Wins Above Replacement player and is a weighted statistic that is used to evaluate how a player performed offensively and defensively compared to an average player at the same position.
[4] OBP means on-base percentage and is a measure of a hitter's success. OBP is computed by dividing the sum of a player's hits, walks, and times hit by pitch by the sum of his at-bats, walks, times hit by pitch, and sacrifices.
[5] WHIP means walks plus hits per inning pitched and is a measure of a pitcher's success. WHIP is computed by dividing the number of walks and hits given up by a pitcher by the number of innings the pitcher has pitched.

Rzewnicki, 1993; Falk, Lidor, Lander, & Lang, 2004; Geisler &Leith, 1997; Morris, 2000; Prescott, 1996; Regnier, Salmela, & Russell, 1993; Reilly et al., 2000; Schroth, 1995; Williams & Reilly, 2000) have attempted, with minimal success, to identify talented players. Despite the time, effort, and energy devoted to this area of research, the only substantive agreement that can be found is that continued success in sports is largely dependent on a host of external factors, including opportunities to practice, remaining injury-free, the quality and receptiveness of coaching provided during developmental years, and various personal, social and cultural factors (i.e. Bloom, 1985; Durand-Bush & Salmela, 2002; Reilly et al. 2000). Given the limitations of the scientific models (e.g. Auweele et al., 1993; Falk et al., 2004; Geisler &Leith, 1997) and the difficulty of measuring or gaining appropriate knowledge of the external factors suggested by Bloom (1985) and others (Durand-Bush & Salmela, 2002; Reilly et al. 2000), MLB teams long ago resorted to using expert observers to detect the talent. Teams that are able to identify the best prospects at the earliest possible age and develop them through their system are provided with a competitive advantage (Gennaro, 2007; MLS, 2006). Empirical evidence exists supporting the use of expert observers to detect talent (Cote, Salmela, Trudel, Bariam, & Russell, 1995; Thomas & Thomas, 1999) only in circumstances where expert observers have opportunities to observe over an extended period of time.

Vrljic & Mallett (2008) created a talent identification framework based on their work with expert observers that encompasses four major dimensions: 1) physical skills; 2) technical skills; 3) cognitive-perceptual skills, and; 4) personal qualities. These dimensions, while specific allow for subjective and objective measures and were used as the framework for the study. The primary purpose of this research was to determine the

processes used by a MLB to identify talent. An secondary purpose of this research was to determine if some of the talent identification measures utilized were the same, modified, or unique to a specific global area, in this case the Dominican Republic. The purpose was not to provide a boiler plate evaluation system that could be used to predict which players will make the Major Leagues or not, but to determine the various elements of how a MLB team identified players whom they deemed talented and the processes they used to make this determination. The questions directing this research were: 1) what methods of talent identification did this MLB team use to identify talent, and; 2) how, if at all, were these methods of talent identification altered to meet the demands of talent identification in the Dominican Republic.

The next section of this paper outlines the theoretical framework that guided this study, including Vrljic & Mallet's (2008) four dimensional talent identification model and Giulianotti & Robertson's (2007) concept of glocalization. The methods utilized to conduct the study are next presented, followed by the findings. Implications in terms of talent identification strategies for professional baseball teams are then discussed. Finally, the conclusion outlines the contributions of this research and offers recommendations for future research.

**Theoretical Framework**

The concepts of talent identification (Vrljic & Mallett, 2008) and globalization (Giulianotti & Robertson, 2007) were used to frame this study. The global aspect of talent identification in this research offers the opportunity to examine talent identification by an MLB team in both a global and local context to determine special circumstances that impact the identification of athletes in the Dominican Republic that are not present in the

United States. Previous research has yet to explore talent identification in a non-local

context, as the main focus has been on domestic athletes being evaluated by and for

domestic personnel (Cote, Salmela, Trudel, Bariam, & Russell, 1995; Thomas &

Thomas, 1999; Vrljic & Mallett, 2008). In this study the talent identification was being

conducted by individuals trained in a foreign organization (the MLB parent club) to

assess Dominican talent; thus, it seemed crucial to adopt a broader globalization lens to

delineate the talent identification methods used and provide context and depth to the

study.

**Talent Identification**

Talent identification is the ability to recognize participants with the potential to

become elite players (Pearson, Naughton, Torode, 2006; Petola, 1992; Regnier, Salmela,

& Russell, 1993; Williams & Reilly, 2000; Ziemainz & Gulbin, 2002). The goal of talent

identification is to predict performance over time by subjectively and objectively

"measuring physical, physiological, psychological and sociological attributes as well as

current technical abilities" (Regnier, Salmela, & Russell, 1993, p. 300). As defined by

Williams & Franks (1998) talent identification is made up of four stages: 1) detection, 2)

identification, 3) selection, and 4) development. In their explanation, talent detection

refers to identifying individuals with specific characteristics that may predispose them for

success in a specific sport. At this stage, participants typically are not participating in the

sport in question. At the talent identification stage the goal is to identify those currently

participating in the sport with the potential to become elite players. Talent selection

encompasses selecting players who display talent or achieve certain levels or

performance for inclusion on various teams. Talent development is the training and

instruction athletes receive after being identified as talented (Williams & Franks, 1998). This thesis focused on the identification stage.

The standard mode of talent identification continues to be the expert observer in the form of either talent scouts or coaches (Bartmus et al., 1987; Gulbin & Ackland, 2009; Kozel, 1996; Reilly, Bangsbo & Franks, 2000). Vrljic & Mallett (2008) identified four dimensions in which coaches/expert observers conceptualize talent to identify players with the potential to become elite performers. The four dimensions they identified were: 1) physical skills, 2) technical skills, 3) cognitive-perceptual skills, and; 4) personal qualities. These four dimensions closely resemble the four categories used by Tennis Australia (Ayres, 2006), the Western Australian Institute for Sport (Richards, 1999), and the Real Federaciaon Espanola de Tenis (Sanz Rivas, 2006), and are similar to those developed by Williams & Reilly (2000). The Western Australia Institute for Sport (Richards, 1999) focuses on physical, psychological or mental attributes, while Tennis Australia (Ayres, 2006) explores psychological abilities, physical abilities and technical awareness and decision-making. The Real Federaciaon Espanola de Tenis (Sanz Rivas, 2006) separated the elements more by developing generic capabilities which encompassed body composition and physical capacities, attitude and tennis talent using psychological tests and measuring attitude during competition, and specific tennis abilities which measured technical skills and consistency. Williams & Reilly (2000) identified motor/technical skills, perceptual/cognitive skills, psychological makeup, physical attributes, and physiological characteristics. Of note is that all of these models were sport specific constructions.

Physical skills including speed, strength, and aerobic fitness (Ayers, 2006; Williams & Reilly, 2000) have been shown to relate to success in various sports (Hoare, 2000; Keogh, Weber, & Dalton, 2003; Pienaar, Spamer, & Steyn, 1997; Williams & Reilly, 2000). Pienaar et al. (1997) found youth rugby players could be selected with 88% accuracy based on 14 physical and motor tests and 14 anthropomorphic measurements. A longitudinal analysis of these predictions (i.e. a one-year study) was not conducted and the sample included only male children chosen for select teams. In Keogh et al. (2003) players selected for advanced field hockey teams were leaner, registered faster times for the 10-m and 40-m sprint, scored better on agility tests, possessed  greater aerobic capacity and lower body power, and displayed greater shooting accuracy. However, these measures were largely dependent on sport and/or position (Reilly et al., 2000; Williams & Reilly, 2000), since the physical skills and anthropomorphic attributes that would lead to success in field hockey would be different from those in rugby or baseball. Analyses were complicated through the multifactorial elements (e.g. height, weight, body fat, education, hours of practice, self-confidence, motor skills, and aerobic capacity) of each assessment.

Technical skill assessments using sport-based skills evaluations have also been used to separate elite from sub-elite performers in various sports including skiing (Muller, Bartlett, Raschner, Schwameder, Benko-Bernwick, & Lindinger, 1997), basketball (Hoare, 2000; Derri, Kioumourtzoglou, & Tzetzis, 1998), water polo (Falk et al., 2004), field hockey (Elferink, Visscher, Lemmink, & Mulder, 2003; Keogh et al., 2003; Nieuwenhuis, Spamer, & Van Rossum, 2002) and handball (Lidor, Falk, Arnon, Cohen, Segal, & Lander, 2005). Muller et al. (1997) found experienced and intermediate

skiers had significant differences in their ability to execute proper turn techniques, while

Elferink et al. (2003) found elite youth field hockey players performed better than sub-

elite players on dribbling tests.

In the area of cognitive-perceptual skills, which is the player's decision-making

on-the-field, their ability to "read the game" (i.e., anticipate actions in game play) (Vrljic

& Mallett, 2008, p. 76), and their ability to anticipate what will happen and respond in a

game appropriate manner is more advanced in elite level players than in sub-elite players

(Elferink et al., 2003; Falk et al., 2004; Williams, 2000). Skilled players were able to

recall and recognize patterns of play more effectively than their less skilled counterparts

allowing them to anticipate and respond to potential events before they occurred (Elferink

et al., 2003; Falk et al., 2004; Williams, 2000). However, since these players also earned

higher scores in technical proficiency and were physiologically different than their less

responsive counterparts the perception of whether they were able to "read the game"

more effectively may have been influenced by their technical competency and physical

superiority (Elferink et al., 2003; Falk et al., 2004; Williams, 2000).

While researchers have not identified specific personality traits that guarantee

successful sport performance (Morris, 2000) they have identified personality aspects that

appear to correlate well with athletic success. Reilly et al. (2000) found that elite-level

youth footballers experienced less somatic anxiety and were more inclined to perceive

somatic and cognitive anxiety and self-confidence as beneficial to their performance than

sub-elite players. Additionally, Bloom (1985) and others (Elferink et al., 2003; Falk et al.,

2004; Holt & Dunn, 2004; Nieuwenhuis et al., 2002) found that elite and sub-elite players

could also be differentiated based on motivation. Despite these findings, Morris (2000)

believed that the psychological variables that were important indicators of adult performance may not be the same in youth athletes (up to age 15) and should not be used to identify talented young players. Morris (2000) goes on to state that researchers should refrain from performing cross-sectional studies of general psychological characteristics with both youth and adult populations since these attributes may develop over time and using these adult psychological variables in the evaluation process for an unstudied population (youths) could lead to false exclusion of athletes from select teams.

**Globalization**

Despite extensive research on sport in a global context (Bale, 1991; Bradish, Stevens, & Lathrop, 2003; Hargreaves, 2000; Hill & Vincent, 2006; Hirst & Thompson, 1999; Jackson, 2001; Jarvie, 2003; Kim & Yoo, 2004; Klein, 2006; Lanfranchi & Taylor, 2001; Magee & Sugden, 2002; Olatawura, 2006; Rowe, 2003), sport globalization as a concept has yet to be defined. Globalization has consistently been described as a complex set of "processes that operates alongside, intersects with, and is often contradicted by, other macro processes and micro phenomena" (Rowe, 2006, p. 432). Robertson (1995) stated that globalization encompasses "the compression of the world and the intensification of consciousness of the world as a whole" (p. 8). Additionally, globalization is not unilinear, as local people, cultures, and contexts are able to "redefine, selectively accept, reject or transform, global flows of products and services, as well as the ability to globalize products" (Amara & Henry, 2004, p. 2). This creates a global-local intersection where the local is impacted by and able to impact the global, privileging neither global nor local over the other (Amara & Henry, 2004; Giulianotti & Robertson, 2006; Robertson, 1995).

Understanding the intersection of the local and the global, Robertson (1995) coined the term "glocalization" (p. 27). Glocalization explains "how the symbiosis of the local and the global differs according to particular cultural circumstances" (Robertson, 1995, p. 27). Glocalization (Giulianotti & Robertson, 2007) acknowledges that globalization includes "the critical construction and reinvention of local cultures vis-a-vis other cultural entities" (Giulianotti & Robertson, 2007, p. 134). A combination of the words "globalization" and "localization," glocalization is used to describe a product, service, or, in this case, a method of evaluation that is developed in one area and implemented in another part of the world after being altered to accommodate the consumer or conditions in the local marketplace (Khondker, 2004). Meaning that the talent evaluation method used by a MLB team was analyzed at the global level, which involves the traditional units of talent identification that are employed globally, and at the local level, which involves how the identification of talented prospects was adapted to conform with local customs or environmental factors. Khondker (2004) states that, "products or services that are effectively 'glocalized' are, by definition, going to be of much greater interest to the end user" (p. 4). In this case, the glocalization of talent identification for a MLB team attempts to provide a more effective model for determining which athletes have the greatest chance for success in the future, at least at the Dominican level.

Giulianotti & Robertson (2007) argued glocalization is crucial in transcultural interpretations of football (soccer) balancing the aspects of global homogeneity and local heterogeneity that inhabit glocalization. Glocalization, as defined by Giulianotti & Robertson, has four distinct elements: 1) relativization, where individuals/organizations

attempt to preserve their prior practices in a new environment; 2) accommodation, where individuals/organizations utilize a pragmatic approach to adopting practices associated with other societies; 3) hybridization, where individuals/organizations combine local and outsider culture to produce distinctive, hybrid cultural practices, and 4) transformation, where individuals/organizations favor the practices associated with other cultures. These four distinct methods of cultural adaptation provide various avenues for MLB teams to modify their approach to talent identification in the Dominican Republic while also maintaining aspects of talent identification they believe are universal.

Previous scholars have used glocalization as a framework for sport analysis (Amara & Henry, 2004; Falcous & Maguire, 2005; Guilianotti & Robertson, 2006). Amara & Henry (2004) used glocalization to explain the response of Algerian society to western modernity in football (soccer), Giulianotti & Robertson (2006) used glocalization in the world of football through an examination of the leading clubs as transnational corporations. Falcous & Maguire (2005) used glocalization to help explain how the NBA is presented and interpreted in the local-global contexts through the media. This research (Amara & Henry, 2004; Falcous & Maguire, 2005; Giulianotti & Robertson, 2006) concluded that glocalization refers to the tailored shape global sports, ideas, representations, and marketing efforts take on as they are immersed in a local setting that is foreign to their point of origin.

Whilst not explicitly using the context of glocalization, Klein (1991) also explained the local nature of baseball in the Dominican Republic and what the game represents to the country in juxtaposition to the games meaning and style of play in the United States. Kelly (2006) further explored what he terms "samurai" baseball in Japan

and its "uncanny mimicry" (p. 187) to baseball in the United States, by stating that it provides "the unnerving sensation of encountering something both familiar and foreign at the same time" (p. 194). The idea of the familiar and foreign was illustrated in this research as the global aspects of talent identification may be familiar to many baseball fans, but the local aspects of the talent identification in the Dominican Republic provided the foreign counterpart.

With this in mind, I chose the framework of globalization as "glocalization" (Giulianotti & Robertson, 2007) to examine the talent identification methods developed by a United States-based MLB team and applied in the Dominican Republic. The talent identification measures were discussed and analyzed in direct relationship to how they fit the glocalization categories of relativization, accommodation, hybridization, and transformation as identified by Giulianotti & Robertson (2007). Using this framework I assessed how a MLB team maintains, modifies, or creates new methods for how they conduct talent identification to operate in the Dominican Republic.

## Research Design

Given the concurrent nature of the dissertation research and the overlap in design between the three papers within the study, the specific methods decisions for each study are presented in each respective paper. Chapter Two provided a detailed overview of the research design used to conduct the study. The consistent nature of the majority of elements of the setting, methodology, data collection and researcher's role allow this format to separate the unique features of each study and observe the consistency in the majority of areas in regards to the research methods.

**Researcher's role**

*Positionality*

I began the study with assumptions which may have influenced interpretation of participant responses. For example, the investigator began with the assumptions that (a) objective measures of talent identification would be limited, and (b) processes of talent identification would be much different in the Dominican than the United States. I also began with prior knowledge of literature related to talent identification.

*Political Considerations*

The political considerations of this study focused on working as a MLB team's English Language Coordinator while also trying to conduct research about the team's talent identification process. The impact of this situation could have been two-fold as it may have impacted my final analysis of the materials and it may have limited the responses of the participants. All of those interviewed for the case may have been reluctant to provide confidential or proprietary information.

**Participants**

Criterion sampling (Patton, 2002) was used in this study. Patton (2002) suggests using criterion sampling when the researcher determines specific criterion and uses all cases that fit the established criteria. Since the goal of the research was to document the talent identification process and how it might be modified or altered based on locale, the criteria for sampling included only team personnel that had input on which Dominican players were signed players during my stay in the academy. Administrators who had no input as to which players were signed were not included in the study. Thirteen individuals participated in this study, all of whom worked directly for the MLB team under study and had input on which players were signed to contracts during the 2007 Dominican Summer

League season. Players and other team personnel were not included in this portion of the

study because they did not have direct or influential decision-making power in making

talent identification decisions.

Administrators were explained the details of the study during face-to-ace

meetings and invited to participate. They were also distributed a paper explaining the

nature of the study, their right to exclude themselves from the study at any time, and their

right to not answer any question which they did not want to answer. No administrator

rejected the invitation to participate in the study and most appeared eager to be afforded

the opportunity to tell their story.

**Data Collection**

**Semi-Structured Interviews.**

A semi-structured interview guide was developed to assist with data collection

and was based on information garnered from resources that addressed the Dominican

baseball academies (e.g. Klein, 1991, 1994, 2006; Ruck, 1999; Marcano & Fidler, 2002,

etc.), previous research on talent identification (see: Auweele, Cuyper, Mele, &

Rzewnicki, 1993; Falk, Lidor, Lander, & Lang, 2004; Geisler and Leith, 1997; Morris,

2000; Prescott, 1996; Regnier, Salmela, & Russell, 1993; Reilly et al., 2000; Schroth,

1995; Williams & Reilly, 2000), and to address the research questions. Interview

questions were developed with the goal exploring methods of talent identification and

discovering specific details that administrators look for when identifying talent.

Questions were created through an analysis of the literature related to talent identification

(i.e. Auweele, Cuyper, Mele, & Rzewnicki, 1993; Falk, Lidor, Lander, & Lang, 2004;

Geisler and Leith, 1997; Morris, 2000, etc.). Administrators were asked multiple

questions about the processes they use to identify talent and how those procedures may

be modified for the Dominican Republic. They were asked to elaborate on their

procedures and provide specific elements or details to explain these concepts. By asking

the administrators questions aimed at determining their methods of talent identification,

the goal was to elicit accurate depictions of the various elements utilized in the talent

identification process.

The guide consisted of approximately 30 questions and was organized into three

parts (Appendix A), with questions in the second section directly relating to talent

identification. The first section of questions related to the general academy environment

that included perceptions of the academy and its coaches and staff. In the second section,

questions addressed the system of talent identification in the Dominican Republic. The

third section was related to player migration issues and decisions. Follow-up questions to

pursue specific lines of questioning and to allow me to explore administrators' answers in

more detail were also used (Rubin & Rubin, 1995). The interviews were used to gather

information in the words of the participants, and these words allow for a better

interpretation of the phenomenon being studied (Bogden & Bilken, 1998). All of the

administrators were asked the same initial questions with follow-up questions varying

from participant to participant based on their responses.

**Data Analysis**

After data collection was complete, all interview transcripts and notes were

compiled into Word documents. The data was then analyzed using the theoretical

frameworks (Vrljic & Mallet, 2008; Giulianotti & Robertson, 2007). This process was

directed through the use of the thematic coding process described by Boyatzis (1998).

Boyatzis (1998) explained that thematic codes are generated in three different ways: "(a) theory driven, (b) prior data or prior research driven, and (c) inductive (i.e., from the raw data) or data driven" (p. 29). In this case, themes were developed in two of the three ways. The data was initially coded for in an inductive manner where the interviews were analyzed for elements relating to the talent identification process. In this process, different categories were identified and grouped into themes (i.e. teachable, natural etc.) and references to these items were placed in the appropriate categories. After the inductive coding was complete, the Vrljic & Mallet (2008) and Giulianotti & Robertson (2007) frameworks were used to group the existing data categories into the a priori categories of physical skills, technical skills, cognitive-perceptual skills, and personal qualities and relativization, accommodation, hybridization, and transformation. During this process, I looked for specific cases that illustrated themes and made comparisons and contrasts between these themes (Neuman, 2003). Ideas or concepts that did not fit the Vrljic & Mallet (2008) or Giulianotti & Robertson (2007) frameworks were grouped into new categories and used to create new themes. Finally, the categories were determined and the best examples of the categories were selected to illustrate and represent each theme.

## Findings

As stated in the introduction, the goal of this research was to provide a framework of how one MLB team evaluated player potential. The findings document elements used in talent identification, how the team adapted their standard protocols to fit the context of the Dominican Republic, and one are of concern for international talent evaluation. This section explains how team administrators conceptualized talent identification criteria and

the issues that underlay talent identification in the Dominican Republic. The findings are

organized into three large-scale categories, teachable abilities, natural abilities, and the

Dominican Impact. The separation of teachable and natural abilities in the organization of

the findings was due to the administrators' constant identification of skills/abilities that

they would be unable to teach a player and skills/abilities that they regularly stated could

be improved with the proper coaching. The final category was developed through my

understanding of how identifying talent in the Dominican Republic was different from

the United States and other baseball-playing countries based on the comments made by

the administrators. Furthermore, the teachable and natural abilities categories are

additionally defined by the globalization framework of Giulianotti & Robertson (2007)

and Vrljic & Mallett's (2008) talent identification framework.

**Teachable Abilities**

Teachable abilities were the elements of talent identification that the MLB team

believed they could teach to players if they entered their minor league system. While

some players possessed these abilities at the time of evaluation, other players did not.

They were evaluated on potential, and whether the administrators believed they could

attain advanced levels of performance with proper instruction. For position players,

swing mechanics, aggressiveness, fielding range, and throwing accuracy were all deemed

teachable abilities. A pitcher's teachable abilities consisted solely of the movement and

velocity of their secondary pitches (e.g. change-up[6], curveball[7], and/or slider[8]).

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[6] A pitch that is delivered with the same throwing motion as a fastball, but is gripped differently to decrease the speed of the pitch and fool the hitter
[7] A pitch that breaks on a downward path as it approaches home plate and may possess some lateral break
[8] A pitch that breaks on a lateral and downward path

**Relativization.**

Talent identification measures utilized in this section represent a preservation of methods and practices utilized in all geographic locales by the MLB team. The below technical criteria were the core teachable abilities used to evaluate talent in position players and pitchers.

*Technical – Position Players.*

Position players' technical skill assessment included swing mechanics, aggressiveness, fielding, and throwing accuracy.

*swing mechanics.*

Swing mechanics were assessed in terms of stride length and weight shift/loading, with these often examined in tandem. Stride length was the distance of the forward step that a player took with their front foot as they prepared to hit the ball. The administrators preferred to see a small step, with some even preferring no step at all, just a lifting and replacing of the foot in its original position. Weight shift and loading entailed the hitter slightly shifting his weight towards his back leg and simultaneously shifting his hands to a position slightly behind his back shoulder that was either parallel to or just below shoulder height. The players' swing mechanics were a focal point of administrators' discussions. Most believed drastically altering a player's swing would be extremely difficult due to players' tendencies to revert back towards natural and not learned behavior in high pressure (i.e. game) situations. However, they felt that the two areas where a change was possible was adjusting the length of a player's stride and making sure they loaded/shifted their weight properly.

**aggressiveness.**

The aggressiveness of a hitter was also evaluated. Aggressiveness was defined as first, the ability/willingness to swing at an imperfect pitch and make solid contact (Administrator Six, personal communication, February 5, 2007) ; and second, the ability to consistently hit a perfect pitch and drive the ball to left-center or right-center field.

**fielding and throwing accuracy.**

Fielding ability was a combination of a player's range and overall ability to make plays defensively. Range was the amount of area on the field a player was able to effectively cover. Overall ability encompassed how softly or fluidly the player fielded the ball and how well the player executed the throw. A player's fielding ability was measured through similar processes for the various positions. Players were placed at a position in the infield and outfield and were hit groundballs and flyballs (outfielders) or pop-ups (infielders). The administrators wanted to determine how well the player was able to react in the direction of the batted ball, how great a distance they were able to cover, and how often they were able to successfully deliver the ball to the proper base. The administrators also observed how easily a player was able to accomplish the above tasks. Administrator Six stated,

> If a guy makes it look easy, that's what you want. For instance, watch [name redacted]. He's almost always in the right spot, never seems to be in a hurry, and has soft hands and can make the throws. Now [name redacted], on the other hand, makes the plays most of the time, but it's choppy and he seems to be nervous and rushing. A guy who's a good fielder never seems to be in a hurry and knows how much time he has to make the play. (personal communication, Feb. 7, 2007)

Infielders were judged on a combination of range and overall fielding ability, while outfielders were evaluated on range and throwing ability. Catchers were judged on overall fielding ability and throwing ability. Throwing ability consisted of the player's ability to get the ball from their position to the required base with the necessary velocity/arm strength and accuracy. The requirements for velocity/arm strength were different for each position, but the accuracy component was vital for success at each position. For instance, second basemen were typically throwing the ball from an area between first and second base to either first or second base. The longest throw they typically made was on a double play when they are required to throw the 90 feet from second base to first base. Comparatively, outfielders, specifically the right fielder, may be required to throw the ball several hundred feet in order to complete a play.

The administrators noted the differences in throwing requirements by stating that it is a matter of positionality, "If a guy's playing first or second base, I'm not really worried about his arm strength, but if he's playing shortstop or third, then I need to see that hop when the ball comes out of his hand," (Administrator One, April 26, 2007). Velocity/arm strength was gauged by the trajectory of the ball, with scouts preferring small arcs to rainbow-type arcs. Small arcs on throws meant the throws were thrown with greater velocity and reach their targets more quickly. Rainbow arcs showed a lack of arm strength and would reach their targets at a slower speed. Accuracy was easily evaluated, by even the most novice of observers, as the ball was either delivered on time to the appropriate spot or it was not. If it was not, the person fielding the ball typically had to move substantially to one side, jump to field the ball, or the ball arrived too late to record an out. In all of these areas, the administrators believed that consistent practice and

coaching could alleviate the majority of issues associated with these categories. While they did not believe they had the ability to alter a player of extremely limited range and arm strength into an MLB shortstop with fantastic range and a strong arm, they believed that they could help that player develop these abilities through practice and game study.

### *Technical - Pitchers.*

Pitchers' technical skills assessment included and evaluation of the movement and velocity of their secondary or off-speed pitches. These pitches typically included a changeup and/or either a curveball or a slider.

**velocity and movement of secondary pitches.**

The velocity of a pitcher's secondary pitches was determined with the use of a radar gun by the administrators. The movement of a pitcher's secondary pitches was determined through a visual analysis by the administrators. Pitchers were asked to throw a number of secondary pitches during their tryouts. The administrators would use the radar gun to determine velocity and watch the pitch as it moved from the pitcher's mound to home plate to gauge movement. While both the movement and velocity of secondary pitches were evaluated independently mitigating factors also played a role. For instance, the desired velocity of the secondary pitches was based on their relationship to the velocity of the pitcher's fastball. The administrators stated an average change-up had between 8-10 miles per hour difference from a fastball for a pitcher who used it as his tertiary pitch and 12-15 miles per hour difference for a pitcher who used it as his secondary pitch. Thus, for a pitcher who threw a 92 mph fastball and who's second best pitch was a change-up, the velocity of the change-up should have been between 75-80 mph. If the change-up was the third best pitch it would have fallen between 82-84 mph.

In short, a pitcher's curveball velocity should fall somewhere in between the fastball and change-up range and a slider should fall between the curveball and fastball velocities.

However, solely possessing the appropriate velocity range for secondary pitches was not a sufficient reason for a player to be offered a contract. The player also needed to possess the requisite movement on their pitches. When evaluating a curveball the team focused on the downward and side-to-side movement of the pitch. A typical curveball moved downward and across the pitchers' body as it approached home plate. A slider moved in a similar fashion but with more velocity and a later, sharper break on the pitch. Change-ups typically possessed a slightly downward to sharply downward movement as the pitch approached home plate.

The velocity and movement of secondary pitches were defined as one category due to their co-dependent relationship as both appropriate movement and velocity needed to be present for pitchers to be considered. Additionally, unlike the fastball, administrators believed that adjustments could be made to a pitchers' grip on the ball and/or selection of which secondary pitches to use (e.g. slider or curveball) based on a pitcher's throwing motion to improve both the velocity and/or movement of these pitches.

**Natural Abilities**

Natural abilities were the elements of talent identification that players could not be taught. For position players, natural abilities included speed, power, and hitting. For pitchers, fastball velocity, fastball movement, and pitching mechanics were natural abilities. While slight improvements in some of these areas were possible, it was largely deemed that proper coaching or training would be insufficient to significantly improve

deficits in natural abilities and that their presence or absence was permanent. Additionally, all players were evaluated for their natural abilities in feel for the game and make-up. Feel for the game was a player's ability to anticipate what would happen and respond in a game appropriate manner. Make-up consisted of a player's emotional response to negative or positive game situations.

### Relativization

Talent identification measures utilized in this section represent a preservation of methods and practices utilized in all geographic locales by the MLB team. These categories represented a preservation of methods and practices utilized extensively, without alteration, in both the United States and the Dominican. These categories also form the core of the talent identification process.

### *Physical - Position Players.*

### speed.

The first physical skill addressed by the administrators was running speed. Running speed was measured by the players foot speed and was tested through the utilization of one of two methods. The methods were timed speed in either the 60-yard dash or in a sprint from home plate to first base[9]. While a discrepancy existed among the administrators about how to project a player's future running speed, the recorded times represented a logical measure. Most believed that increased weight and muscle mass would decrease a player's speed Only in rare cases would a player increase their speed after they entered the academy or migrated to the United States. Administrator Eight

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[9] The sprint from home plate to first base was measured after the player would make contact with the ball and was unsure if the ball would be a base hit or not. Thus, the runner would take a direct line to the base after contact as opposed to the rounded route players take when they are assured of a hit.

explained the difficulty in assessing future running speed despite the ability to accurately assess this criteria at the present time.

> If a guy runs 6.8 (60-yard dash time) you have to project, is he going to get faster or is he going to get slower? Or he might just stay the same. If a kid's going to get bigger then there's a big chance he's going to get slower and most of the kids get bigger here (in the Dominican Academy). Some guys are athletic enough not to get slower. (personal communication, August 10, 2007)

Administrators believed that some players were athletic enough or possessed the right body type to be able to either maintain or increase their speed; however, they did not always agree on which players these were.

**power.**

Power was the only other physical criteria assessed among position players. The administrators defined power as the ability of a given player to be able to hit a specific number of home runs at the MLB-level in the future. Thus, power might not be present in a player's current ability, but would be apparent when a player fully physically developed and was competing against MLB players. In projecting a player's power, administrators favored individuals who were taller and leaner over those who were shorter and, may have, currently possessed more power. In opposition to running speed, a subjective evaluation was performed to evaluate power. Power was evaluated by considering a player's size, body type, musculature, and how the ball reacted when hit. As Administrator Three stated,

> For power you like to see the guys who have a little more size. Not necessarily thickness, since they're still growing, but height and a good wingspan. We also

look at their hands and feet to see how much we think they might grow. (personal

communication, February 1, 2007)

Some administrators stated that certain major league players were identifiable by the

sound that was made when their bat made contact with the ball. When not listening for a

particular sound the scouts were examining the ball for backspin as it came off the bat

since backspin allowed the ball to travel further. Administrator Three explained,

You look for guys who when they hit the ball it looks like it would carry forever.

You want to see the ball to come off the bat with the same spin that you have

when you hit a good drive in golf. (personal communication, February 1, 2007)

*Physical - Pitchers.*

**fastball velocity.**

The velocity of a pitcher's fastball was the most important factor in determining a

pitcher's potential. A pitcher's velocity was measured through the use of a radar gun held

by one of the administrators. If a player did not consistently reach the high 80s in miles

per hour with his fastball he was immediately eliminated from the talent identification

process.

A kid could have a good curveball or changeup, but if he throws 82 [miles per

hour] and we can't envision him adding something to his fastball, we won't sign

him. At 82 [mph] you can't even get guys out in [the Dominican Summer] league.

(Administrator Twelve, personal communication, August 13, 2007)

**fastball movement.**

Fastball movement was a major component of fastball analysis and consisted of

the drop or side-to-side motion of the fastball. Fastball movement was observed in an

identical fashion to the movement of secondary pitches. Pitchers were asked to throw a number of secondary pitches during their tryouts and the administrators would watch the pitch as it moved from the pitcher's mound to home plate to gauge either side-to-side or downward movement. The flight path of the ball was also examined. The generally accepted practice was for the ball to fade in the same direction as the throwing arm. Administrator Seven stated, "If this [the traditional movement] doesn't happen then something is wrong with that players arm action." The administrators believed that fastball movement was largely a natural component based on a pitcher's natural throwing motion and was unable to be taught.

**hand dominance.**

Determining which hand a pitcher threw with was hand dominance. This was the simplest of criteria, but played a major role in a pitchers' evaluation as the team was more likely to sign a left-handed pitcher lacking in a few criteria than they were to sign a right-handed pitcher lacking in any of the criteria. The logic behind this determination was the fact that left-handed pitchers were rarer than right-handed pitchers; thus, the team could be highly selective with right-handed pitchers, due to their abundance, and needed to be less selective with left-handed pitchers.

*Technical –Position Players.*

**hitting.**

The elements of hitting represented the natural technical criteria for position players. Hitting was defined by the team administrators as a prospects ability to hit . 290+

average[10] in MLB. Hitting was exclusive of power and had several visually available

elements (i.e., bat speed/quickness, bat wrapping, swing length) that were evaluated.

Current success did not always foretell a strong rating and poor current performance did

not always lead to a poor evaluation. The hitting-related evaluation criteria were bat

speed/quickness, bat wrap, and swing length. To assess these elements, scouts observed

players in the batting cages, in on-field batting practice, and, where possible, in a

scrimmage game.

Bat speed/quickness was measured by how rapidly a player could swing the bat

through the hitting zone. Administrator Eight described the bat speed evaluation process,

I'm looking for a quick bat. I know one when I see one, but you're also looking

for if they're always reaching for balls out of the strike zone or always in front of

a curveball or change-up. To me, that means they don't have the bat speed. I

know these guys aren't major leaguers, but you look at how many times it

happens and how bad they look. Everybody gets fooled from time to time, but

getting fooled every time means something's wrong. (personal communication,

August 10, 2007)

Bat wrapping, which was the cocking or tilting the bat behind the hitters head and toward

the pitcher before the hitter begins the forward swing motion, was also a consideration in

the hitting evaluation process. Swing length, which was related to bat wrapping, was

another area that was scrutinized by the administrators. Administrators wanted players

with short swings which meant they kept the knob of the bat inside the baseball and

hands closer to their body during the swing. This was referred to as an inside-out swing

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[10] Batting average is defined as the number of hits divided by at bats.

and administrators felt that it closely correlated to bat speed and ability to consistently make solid contact. All three of these hitting elements were visually observed by the administrators with no objective measures used to gauge any of the elements.

*Technical – Pitchers.*

**pitching mechanics.**

In evaluating the pitchers' mechanics, a pitcher's throwing motion and arm angle were considered. While throwing motion and arm angle were intricately linked with the subsequent technical categories of command and control, they will be discussed individually since the administrators considered each of these criteria individually.

The first element of pitching mechanics the administrators considered was throwing motion. Pitchers' motions were assessed to determine if their mechanics were fundamentally sound and aimed to predict how their shoulders, arms, and motions would react over the course of future seasons. When evaluating a pitchers' motion, scouts aimed to ensure that the pitcher's head was slightly behind his belly button when his foot hit the ground. They also wanted to confirm that the pitcher had his plant foot aimed directly at home plate or slightly inward upon impact to create the proper throwing action, as a splayed open foot upon landing often led to a lack of control from the pitcher. A splayed foot on impact usually meant that a pitcher's arm was trailing his body and could lead to undue stress on the arm. This type of landing also meant that the pitcher was unable to reliably repeat their throwing motion and/or consistently hit their target due to having to accelerate the arm after impact with the ground.

The lead foot landing on the heel or toe was also a concern for the administrators. The administrators wanted players who landed with a flat foot in order for the pitcher to

be able to develop a consistent throwing motion. Finally, regardless of any flaw in the mechanics of the throwing motion a major component of the evaluation was the ability of the pitcher to consistently throw in manner using the same mechanics. Administrator Seven explained,

> You want a pitcher who can consistently hit his spots. Does his foot land in the same place every time? Is his arm in the same place every time? Is his release point consistent? That ability to repeat the motion time and time again under any and every circumstance is a key component to success. (personal communication, July 2, 2007)

After evaluating the throwing motion, the administrators analyzed the players arm angle during delivery. The traditional angles that the scouts used were: Overhand, High ¾, ¾, Low ¾, and side-arm and/or submarine, with the traditional angle the High ¾. These distinctions were made through visual analysis and were important when determining which secondary pitches a team might teach a pitcher. The administrators believed a lower arm would lead to struggles throwing the curveball. Thus, pitchers with lower arm angles were advised to throw a slider, as the administrators believed these pitchers would not be able to "get on top" (Administrator Seven, February 9, 2007) of the curveball enough to impart the requisite spin.

In the above categories the administrators believed that adjustments would be nearly impossible to make. While a minute number of pitchers (e.g. Chad Bradford[11]) had made significant changes to their throwing motions and succeeded at the MLB-level, the

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[11] Bradford was initially a sidearm pitcher who lowered his arm angle to submarine during his professional career and had a successful MLB career after making the adjustment.

great majority of pitchers, in the administrators' view, were unable to make an a

adjustment to their natural throwing motion and maintain the required velocity/movement

combination. This strong belief in the permanency of throwing motion created a system

of analysis that provided little area for players who did not fit the administrators' notion

of proper delivery regardless of current ability.

**command and control.**

In their evaluation of command the administrators attempted to determine whether

a pitch consistently performed in its anticipated manner.  For example, if a slider

consistently moved down and across the pitchers body then the pitcher possessed good

command of the pitch. When examining control the administrators attempted to

determine whether the pitcher delivered the ball to the area that the catcher requested. For

example, if the pitch was intended to be on the inside corner of the plate and was on the

outside corner then the pitcher had poor control. Command and control were similar to

throwing accuracy for the position players and was generally assessed through standard

observation techniques. Typically pitchers were assessed from a general standpoint on

command and control during their initial performance and for specific pitches at a later

date.

*Cognitive-Perceptual - All Players.*

**feel for the game.**

Players who had a "feel for the game" was another important criterion for

evaluating player potential. Feel for the game was defined as players who had the ability

to intuitively understand the game, game situations, and understood where the ball

needed to go or which pitch needed to be thrown in all circumstances. While scouts more

often than not were referring to position players when determining players who had a feel for the game, pitchers were also discussed in this manner. Throughout extensive conversation with team administrators the consistent example to explain feel for the game was Derek Jeter of the New York Yankees. Administrator Five explained,

> It's hard to explain, but it's like a guy like Jeter. You remember that play he had against Oakland in the playoffs. That's not where he's supposed to be on that play, but he's there because he knows the situation and he anticipated where the ball might end up and where the best place for him to be was at. That's what you're looking for, guys who instinctively know, and can anticipate, what they need to do and where they need to be. (personal communication, September 20, 2007)

Administrator Eight believed that a team would be unable to teach players these skills.

> Some guys just don't get it. Take (name redacted). He tries to steal the base yesterday [late in a close game] and you know, I know, and he knows, he's slow. Yet, he still tries to do it. It's not a smart move and you can tell him that and explain it, but the next time he's in that situation he'll probably do it again unless [name redacted] tells him not to. Now, [name redacted] would never do that. He's too smart. You can't teach it.

For the pitchers the cognitive-perceptual skills typically involved throwing the right pitch, in the administrators mind, in the given situation. However, a pitcher's feel for the game was not as substantial of a talking point as it was for the position players. When discussing position players the administrators rarely criticized the decision-making of a player who they believed had good cognitive-perceptual skills, yet all pitchers would

be praised one minute and excoriated the next for what the administrators would deem poor decisions.

*Personal Qualities – All Players.*

**make-up.**

"Make-up" was a catch-all term for the personal and psychological aspects of a player that the administrators believed they could perceive. The term make-up included whether or not the player was a hard worker, intelligent, desired to succeed, had a positive attitude, the ability to manage stress, and how players responded to both excellent and poor performances. The administrators also evaluated players for emotional stability. The administrators wanted to observe players who maintained a professional demeanor throughout different game situations. "Mental toughness" was also used synonymously with the term make-up, as Administrator Two believed it was a key element in a player's advancement in the minor league system and in to the major leagues.

> … make-up, which is so important for your development and so important for who you're going to be at the end of your career. Whether you don't make it out of Double-A or go the big leagues at the end of your career right there, the make-up is going to have a lot to do with where you are. (personal communication, September 18, 2007)

Despite the stated importance of make-up, baseball ability trumped all other criteria, "We're out there trying to find the good athletes. Athletics is so goofy sometimes. You can be a con with twenty years in prison, but if you can hit it over the fence we'll give you a shot" (Administrator Three, personal communication, September 18, 2007).

**Accommodation.**

The next set of findings describes genetic scouting and general physicality

criteria. Genetic scouting and general physicality were identified as physical skills due to

their influence on the physical evaluation of a player. Additionally, while these tools

were utilized in evaluations of players in the United States, the process through which the

information was obtained was different in the Dominican Republic.

*Physical – All Players.*

**genetic scouting.**

The concept of genetic scouting was the administrators' desires to obtain access to

a player's family members. The team preferred to be able to accomplish this task with all

potential players, but the difficulty the team had in conducting this element of their

evaluation process in the Dominican was different than in other parts of the world.

Administrator Five explained the difficulty that lacking this option can add to an

evaluation,

> Sometimes it's tough because you can't see their parents, but some of that's
>
> judgment too, his body looks like he can put on more muscle and carry it, that's it
>
> in a nutshell, or if you see his parents, oh, maybe not, he's got a chance to go
>
> south in a hurry. (personal communication, August 8, 2007)

Several administrators explained that access to family members and the opportunity to

meet them was substantially easier in other countries than in the Dominican Republic.

The scouts, as previously stated, believed that their ability to meet a player's parents

would provide them with additional evidence of how their son would develop physically

and the type of baseball player he would be in the future. Administrator One  (personal

communication, April 26, 2007) explained, "You do not always have the benefit of seeing, their mom, their dad, what are they built like, what's his sister, what's his brother [look like], how this kid going to end up looking."

**general physicality.**

While access to a player's family was considered a benefit, observing the player was the most important part of a player's physical evaluation. General physicality encompassed a player's height, weight, the size of their hands and feet, his overall musculature, and athletic grace[12]. No actual tests or measurements were conducted in these areas. Administrators asked the players to state their height and weight and used visual analysis to determine the other criteria. While these matters may be recorded in a similar manner in the United States as they are in the Dominican, the big difference and the reason for the adjustment in evaluation between the United States and Dominican was the level of nutrition and its impact on a players' general physicality. The majority of players in the Dominican were undernourished thus making evaluation challenging when trying to evaluate general physicality. It was difficult to evaluate, at times, whether a player was simply slight of frame or whether he may have been undernourished, as most players were long and lean. Administrator Three (2007) stated,

> Most of the players are undernourished, almost emaciated in some cases and it is
> difficult sometimes to look at them as they are at 15 and 16 and 17 years old and
> imagine what they are going to be like when they are 25.

Additionally, statements along the lines of "he looks like a ball player" (Administrator One, personal communication, April 25, 2007) or "I can see him filling out"

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[12] Athletic grace referred to how fluid a player's movements were in the field.

(Administrator Thirteen, personal communication, February 27, 2007), meaning adding weight and muscle to his frame, were commonplace during practices, games, tryouts and tryout games. Once determinations of nutritional level had been made, athletic grace was the most important criteria. Administrator Three described it as, "… a fluidity in the player's movements that was free of hitches and awkwardness" (personal communication, May 4, 2007).

**Transformation.**

The transformation section of the findings includes areas where the administrators abandoned practices used in the United States in order to properly identify talent in Dominican Republic. While they were not necessarily adopting "hegemonic cultural forms" (Giulianotti & Robertson, 2007, p. 135) they were adopting methodologies that were unnecessary in their traditional operating environment (the United States) for new practices that would allow them to operate in their new environment (the Dominican Republic). This was the result of full adaptation of practices to a local culture or environment.

**Physical - All Players.**

**age determination.**

Age determination was the discovery of the accurate birth age of any prospect the team wished to sign. While accurate birth records were maintained in the first world countries in which the team scouted for talented players, these records were ill-maintained in the Dominican Republic, if they were maintained at all. Age determination was cited by several administrators as the number one issue in terms of Dominican talent identification. Administrator One (personal communication, September 18, 2007) stated,

"Number one, you have to battle through are they really what age they say they are because some players are awesome, the strength, the maturity, well, it's all because they end up being 22 and not 16." This comment was supported by others who believed that determining the actual age of the players assists in the evaluation process and determining the potential for the player. Administrator Twelve (personal communication, August 13, 2007) commented, "You can imagine yourself, the most difficult thing now is the age. Because sometimes they have a really good quality, so you say: 'Oh my!' But you don't trust their age." Additionally, Administrator Ten, a man with experience at all levels of the game in both the United States and the Dominican, said about watching Dominican prospects,

> When you see somebody in great condition at a tryout, great 60 yards, great arm, to me he's not 17 years old. I say, 'Ok, I hope this guy is 17,' and you pray for this guy to be 17. We attempt to sign a lot of players and when they are under investigation we lose them. We lose three or four a year. And that's why sometimes you sign somebody and you can't sleep because you say 'I hope he's the age he told me, because he's going to be a superstar'. (personal communication, July, 25, 2007)

Birth records were unquestioned when dealing with players from the United States, but players in the Dominican Republic underwent an investigation process to determine their age. The administrators clearly stated they did not trust the players. One administrator compared age-related issues in the Dominican to Russian Roulette,

> The majority of the players are the age they say they are, but it's like Russian Roulette. It just takes the team to sign one guy to a big deal and he's not the age

he says he is and, Boom! You're out a couple hundred thousand dollars that you

could have used to sign other players. (Administrator Five, personal

communication, August 10, 2007)

The impact of discovering a false age was almost always player de-selection. Players who

were dishonest about their age were removed from the academy and contract offers were

either withdrawn or, in one case, severely lessened.

## Dominican Impact

### Stereotyping

The use of stereotypes impacted the identification of talented players. While the

traditional stereotype that was formerly common with Latin players of "all field, no hit"

(Klein, 1991, Marcano & Fidler, 2002) has gone by the way side with the emergence of

Dominican and Venezuelan sluggers (i.e., Vladimir Guerrero, Albert Pujols, David Ortiz)

who have populated MLB. Some stereotypes could still be heard from club personnel as

they assessed Dominican talent. In several instances, club personnel commented about

the way that the Dominican players played the game noting that they "play too fast,"

"they rush," and "they need to slow down." This may be attributable to the youth of the

players, but these types of references have also been used in the past to describe Latin

players. "Latin Flair" (Breton & Villegas, 1999; Klein, 1991; Marcano & Fidler, 2002;

Regalado, 2000) is when a player is concerned not only with making the play, but with

being able to make the play with a certain style and often flamboyance. The

administrators would often comment after an error that they would prefer the player

would just make the play and forget the style, thus suggesting this notion of "Latin Flair"

still played a role in player evaluation.

Although stereotypes can have a negative connotation, Newhan & Gutierrez (1999) quoted the Padres director of scouting Brad Sloan as saying, "The amazing thing about the Dominican kids is that they all seem to be able to run, throw and field" (p. D3). Many of the administrators (e.g. Administrator One; Administrator Two, Administrator Five) echoed this sentiment in their comparison of United States and Dominican players of the same age, commenting on the amount of time Dominican players dedicated to their baseball skills in comparison to their United States counterparts. This stereotype provides a connotation of superior ability, but is nonetheless a stereotype. Additionally, while this idea may have been strong with some administrators, not all administrators possessed this bias. Administrator 13 said,

> Whenever I tell people in the States that I'm going down to scout in the Dominican they always say, 'Oh, there's a lot of great talent down there.' To which I tell them 'Yeah, there is, but there are also a lot of kids who suck too. Not everybody down there is good.' (personal communication, February, 27, 2007)

However, when asked, all of the current administrators stated that stereotyping was not used when identifying talent. Yet, these same administrators mentioned specifically targeting pitchers and middle infielders for their Dominican academy, with catchers and centerfielders secondary concerns, and the power positions (left and right field and first and third base) as minor concerns. This ranking of what the team wanted to achieve from their academy follows the typical roles of prominence of Latin players in MLB and the stacking which was present with Latino players in MLB. As Latin players were disproportionally present at the infield, catching, and pitching positions compared to outfield (Lapchick, 2009). Additionally, Administrator Five (personal communication,

April 25, 2007) mentioned, "All Puerto Ricans, I mean Dominicans, have the same body type." Disregarding the verbal slip, which is telling in and of itself, if anyone had spent time examining the various body types of the players on the team I lived with, they would quickly have come to a different conclusion about Dominican players and their alleged uniform body type.

## Discussion

Much like previous research into talent identification, the MLB team used the expert observers in the form of either talent scouts or coaches (Bartmus et al., 1987; Gulbin & Ackland, 2009; Kozel, 1996; Reilly, Bangsbo & Franks, 2000) to determine a player's level of ability. This research separated the findings into teachable and natural abilities. While both abilities may improve with time, the administrators believed that the teachable abilities could be learned by those who did not possess them, while the natural abilities could only be refined by those who already possessed them. The teachable and natural identified abilities were initially divided into categories that defined how much, if at all, the identification procedures were modified by the team to fit the identification system in the Dominican Republic (Giulianotti & Robertson, 2006). Next, the identified abilities were separated into technical, physical, cognitive-perceptual, and personal qualities (Vrljic & Mallett, 2008). The majority of the technical, physical, cognitive-perceptual, and personal qualities were not modified for the Dominican environment; however, two physical qualities (genetic scouting and general physicality) were evaluated slightly differently and one physical quality (age determination) was evaluated in a completely different manner in the Dominican than in the United States.

Previous research (Reilly et al., 2000; Vrljic & Mallet, 2008; Williams & Reilly, 2000) suggested that talent identification was a static process and if specific procedures and mechanisms were to work in English soccer or American baseball then those same procedures and mechanisms could be applied to other regions of the world. This argument implies that the global processes of change (Giulianotti & Robertson, 2007) that impact other areas of the sporting world were not expected to apply to the identification of athletic talent. While the global processes of change did not impact all elements of athletic talent identification in the Dominican Republic, the objective observer must take in to account how specific talent identification mechanisms (technical, physical, cognitive-perceptual, and personal) were altered in various forms to allow the identification of talented players in the Dominican Republic (i.e. accommodation, hybridization, and transformation) (Giulianotti & Robertson, 2007).

The physical qualities identified in this research coincided and differed with the previous research by Vrljic & Mallett (2008). Categories such as speed, power, and general physicality were represented in the current study and in Vrljic & Mallett's (2008) study despite the difference in sporting requirements between soccer and baseball. However, several categories emerged in the current study that were not present in the previous talent identification literature (Reilly et al., 2000; Vrljic & Mallet, 2008; Williams & Reilly, 2000). Hand dominance was of more importance to the evaluators, which was largely related to the importance of pitching hand dominance in baseball. Lefty-righty matchups are a key component of statistical analysis and the rarity of left-handed pitchers and hitters places a higher value on acquiring quality left-handed players than the more plentiful quality right-handed players (Moseman, 2008). Additionally,

genetic scouting and age determination were also elements of talent identification that

have not been previously mentioned in the talent identification research (e.g. Bartmus et

al., 1987; Gulbin & Ackland, 2009; Kozel, 1996; Reilly, Bangsbo & Franks, 2000).

These omissions were due to the previous studies being conducted solely in First World

countries and omitting areas of global accommodation, hybridization, and transformation

that take place in the global talent identification process. Given the monetary wealth that

MLB, or even high level MiLB may provide, it would be beneficial for Dominican

players to attempt to circumvent the age standards and attempt to appear younger. While

this might also be a worthwhile endeavor in First World countries, the developing nature

of Dominican record keeping in regards to births allows players the opportunity to

attempt age obfuscation. Additionally, many of the players left school several years

before attempting to sign with a professional team and scouts were largely observing

them in the team's academy or at a buscone's facility. This precluded the opportunity to

meet a player's family before passing judgment on the player's future growth potential.

      As with the physical skills, the technical skills, while different in nature, reflected

similar requirements needed for success in baseball as Vrljic & Mallett (2008) identified

in soccer. The methods of throwing and catching the ball, swing mechanics, and pitching

mechanics correspond with a soccer players' ability to head, pass, shoot, and control the

ball in their possession. The personal qualities, or make-up, of the players was also an

area that, while addressed in the literature (Morris, 2000; Vrljic & Mallett, 2008) and by

administrators in this study, was of dubious importance since administrators in this study

believed that talent trumped all. This finding of talent superseding personal qualities, or

make-up in baseball terminology, supports the findings of Vrljic & Mallett (2008) who

noted that talent evaluators wanted to see a desire to succeed, but that no personality trait

was a prerequisite for selection as a talented player. Additionally, the notion that

enhanced cognitive-perceptual skills (a feel for the game) was a common trait of talented

players was confirmed by administrators in this study and by Vrljic & Mallett (2008).

The main difference in the two studies is that while the talent evaluators in the Vrljic &

Mallett (2008) study largely believed that these skills could be enhanced through

instruction and practice, the administrators in the present study largely believed that these

skills were innate. Furthermore, the personal quality of make-up was also an important

component for the administrators. This concern for make-up was based on the

administrators' belief that the traits which enhanced Major League performance would be

present in players between the ages of 16 – 22. While this belief may be correct, Morris

(2000) believed that the psychological variables which indicate success for adult

performers may not be the same in youth athletes and should not be used to identify

talented young players since these traits may develop over time and led to inaccurate

assessments of talent and false negatives in terms of talent identification.

An additional area of concern, which was not mentioned in previous research and

may be due to the international nature of this study, was the potential stereotyping of

Dominican talent to specific positions or skills. While the team administrators denied

using stereotypes when attempting to identify talented players in the Dominican

Republic, their statements that they were scouting for certain positions over others lends

credence to the argument that there were perceptions of the typical Dominican player and

the skills that Dominican players were specifically good at performing (Marcano &

Fidler, 2002). Furthermore, the initial use of "Puerto Ricans" when speaking of

Dominican players, by one administrator, could imply a stereotypical perception of all

Latin players. Thus, while the administrators stated that they eschewed the stereotypes of

the Dominican players when assessing talent, many seemed to carry some biases with

them. These biases may or may not have impacted which players they decided to sign,

but they were nevertheless present in the process.  Stereotyping may not be present, or

relevant, in national talent identification processes within more homogenous nations, as

all players would seemingly possess similar attributes and styles, but it does become a

concern in international talent identification or in nations with a great diversity of

population (i.e., the United States). For example, while attempting to identify talented

individuals, the team or organizational administrator has preconceived notions of the

skills an individual may or may not be good at based on ethnic or racial stereotypes the

evaluator may miss the fact that specific players are talented in non-stereotypical areas

but not in the stereotypical areas in which they are assumed to be talented based on the

talent evaluators preconceived notions.

Finally, the emergence of cultural implications on the identification of talent alters

previous models and frameworks of talent identification (e.g. Durand-Bush & Salmela,

2002; Kerrane, 1989; Reilly, Williams, Neville & Franks, 2000), even multidimensional

ones, to include new areas in order to achieve the same objective. The goal of those

seeking to identify the talented individuals and the goal of those seeking to be identified

is the same, but the methodology necessary to identify the talented individuals is shifted

when organizations make their talent search global. The key criteria of the talent search

as identified by Vrljic & Mallet (2008) remain intact and applicable to the broadening of

the identification of talent. How the physical, technical, personal, and cognitive-

perceptual skills are measured and evaluated must adjust to the local environment. Furthermore, the development of various talent identification models for the same sport to be implemented in various parts of the global talent pool could be developed to create more accurate and appropriate talent identification models and not a solitary model for all individuals. Much like how Malcolm Gladwell (2006) explained in his examination of the career of market researcher and psychophysicist, Howard Moskowitz, perhaps there is not one model fit for all types of players in all areas of the global workforce, but a set of models that could be implemented.

**Practical Implications**

The practical implications for this study are three-fold: 1) signing of player's based on teachable and non-teachable abilities; 2) acknowledgement of the implicit stereotyping of Dominican players, how the stereotyping impacts talent acquisition, and how it is economically a poor strategy, and; 3) the development and implementation of different model of talent identification to be utilized in specific global talent pools. In terms of signing players based on teachable and natural abilities, the teams could develop thresholds for current performance that would allow them to predict which players possess at least a base level of ability to allow them to be signed to professional contracts. While the expert observer is utilized as the primary reference point in this study, objective measures, such as bat speed, bat wrapping, command, and control could be measured to create longitudinal data to aid in the development of objective measures to attempt to predict future success.

Acknowledgement of implicit player stereotyping should also be acknowledged in talent identification meetings and the team should also switch their focus form the middle

of the field to the corner positions and pitchers. While pitchers are considered in the team's current middle of the diamond approach, the exclusion of the corner position makes the current middle of the diamond focus a poor economic choice. Players such as Adrian Beltre, Albert Pujols, Sammy Sosa, David Ortiz and countless others have disproven the formerly popular "all field, no hit" stereotype of the Dominican player and proven that Dominican players can develop MLB power. Given this information and knowing that Dominican talent can be acquired at a discounted rate compared to players who are draft eligible, it would make economic sense for the team to pursue the most highly regarded skills, quality pitching and power, for the most cost effective return on investment.

The third implication is the potential development of multiple models of talent identification to be implemented in various locales based on local environmental factors. The MLB has previously acknowledged that while certain standards of talent identification are universal that various methods are adapted or adopted given the local environment. The further development of specific methodologies or models which could be implemented in these areas would assist in the talent identification process. The development and implementation of these new measures may require a period of adjustment and/or development, their utilization has the potential to assist the team in becoming more profitable and more adaptable to the local environments in which they operate.

## Conclusion

The major objective of this paper was to determine a MLB team's criteria for identifying talent and how those criteria are adapted to fit the culture of the Dominican

Republic. All of the categories detailed by Vrljic & Mallett (2008) were examined and

the various components of physical skills, technical skills, cognitive-perceptual skills,

and personal qualities and how they were adapted to the local environment was explained

through the glocalization framework constructed by Giulianotti & Robertson (2007). The

results of this study showed that talent evaluators adapt their decision-making and criteria

to the environment in which they are operating.

This research lends support to the work of Vrljic & Mallet (2008) by showing that

major areas of talent identification are fundamentally similar across sport. As Vrlijic &

Mallet (2008) stated in regards to European football, "No one index of performance was

sufficient to identify talented football players, however, the football coaches reported

several key indices of football talent" (p. 24). Similarly, while no index used by the team

administrators in the MLB academy would guarantee future success in identifying talent

the team administrators did identify many key areas that help them separate talented

players from less talented players. Additionally, the preceding findings on talent

identification have provided evidence that the when constructing a talent identification

model, local aspects of the environment that have the potential to impact talent

identification must be included in the model. In this research the global and local do

interact (Giulianottio & Robertson, 2007) and that the ways of the host environment

(United States) cannot completely dominate the local as cultural and environmental

differences impact the identification of talent in different parts of the world. It has also

shown to that fundamental areas of the talent identification can be global, however

various elements of talent identification must be altered or newly created to adjust for the

cultural or environmental differences present leading to the potential of multiple models for talent identification.

Additional research in this area that attempts to quantify the specific measures of talent identification is needed. With the improvements over the past decade in the technological aspects of measuring swing speed, throwing motions, depth perception, and ball plane movement teams should develop modern models for talent identification at all levels. The construction of extensive longitudinal data on current players at all levels of a team's talent development system would help them better identify prospects and players currently in the system who have the greatest potential for success. While this approach to talent identification might be time-consuming and require a substantial investment in resources and unwavering long-term commitment the return on investment may be extremely beneficial given the large sums currently invested in the talent identification system.

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**CHAPTER 4**
**Paper 2**
**Leaving the Nest:**
**An Examination of Dominican Republic Baseball**
**Players' Motives for Migrating to the United States**

Over the past decade baseball players born in the Dominican Republic and

Venezuela have become common place on the rosters of minor league and Major League

Baseball (MLB) teams (Klein, 2006; Stark, 2007). Several of these baseball players rank

among the elite (Klein, 2006; Stark, 2007). Dominican Republic and Venezuela players

come to the United States to seek baseball opportunities that are not available to them in

their native countries (Breton & Villegas, 1999; Klein, 1991, 1994; Marcano & Fidler,

2002). While both the Dominican Republic and Venezuela have professional baseball

leagues, the financial rewards and level of play are substantially improved at the highest

level in the United States compared to the highest levels in the aforementioned countries

(Jamail, 2008). Thus, many of these players desire to achieve the elite status of playing

MLB in the United States.

The expansion of MLB from 26 to 30 teams in the 1990s lead to an expanded

search for talent (Kelly, 2006; Klein, 2006). As the labor pool extends to encompass a

global workforce, it is important to understand, beyond the obvious potential for

monetary wealth, why players born and raised outside of the United States choose to

leave their country of origin to pursue a career in MLB. The failure to fully explore the

motives of baseball's Dominican migrant workforce impacts our understanding of their

decision-making processes and abilities and reduces them to one-dimensional beings.

The reason given (see Breton & Villegas, 1999; Klein, 1991, 2006; Ruck, 1999) about why Dominican baseball players decide to pursue a career in MLB surrounds the monetary wealth that can be generated by individuals who have few other options. Breton & Villegas (1999) argued that in the United States there is no poverty comparable to that which exists in developing countries. Dominican Republic baseball provides a "vessel of hope," (p. 14) a chance for an escape for those few who are transplanted to American soil with the aim of playing MLB. Klein (1991) also stated that even those players who do not make the MLB club are given the opportunity to earn a wage that is not always accessible in their home country. This rationale, while likely a major component, further confirms the stereotypical, one-dimensional view of Dominican baseball players' motivations to migrate.

In order to provide a greater understanding of Dominican baseball players' motivations in pursuing a career in MLB, Magee & Sugden's (2002) Typology of Football Labor Migration was used to frame this research. Additionally, the previous use of the term typology will be eliminated in this research for a more encompassing set of motivations, as most players have multiple motivations, as acknowledged by previous authors (Magee & Sugden, 2002; Stead & Maguire, 2000) , and do not fit neatly into any specific typology. The sets of motivations format is designed to sensitize us to specific areas of emphasis and should not be used as a tool to assign particular athletes to any of the ideal types, as this would mitigate the complex, and often multivariate, motivations of these individuals (Stead & Maguire, 2000). Magee & Sugden (2002) additionally acknowledged that categories which define a player in their early career may fade or yield to alternative motivations as the player progresses through their career and

approaches the conclusion of their playing days. However, in order to gain a greater understanding of the motivating factors for a player choosing to migrate to the United States to pursue a career in MLB it is best to gain insight into this decision-making process as it is occurring. As Magee & Sugden (2002) argued, initial motivations may be replaced during a player's career, which could lead to the misrepresentation of categories for an initial migration decision.

The purpose of this research was to determine a Dominican Republic academy player's current reasons for their migration decision. The goal behind conducting the research prior to migration taking place is to eliminate the opportunity for a player to create additional or wholly new dominant reasons for their migration in a post-migration interview. A secondary research goal was to examine all entry level players' reasons for migration including those who may never migrate to the United States, those who migrate and have short professional/minor league careers, and those who migrate and reach MLB. The research questions that drove this study were: 1) what were the reasons that Dominican baseball players wanted to migrate to the United States; and 2) were there additional sets of motivations than Magee & Sugden's (2002), which could be identified through the use of present, and not post-hoc identification of the motivations to migrate.

The significance of this study was that it allowed the athletes to explain their decision making and analyze their rationale from a pre-migration perspective, which has not yet been addressed in the literature. In previous research (Magee & Sugden, 2002; Maguire, 1996, 1999), analysis had been reserved for only those athletes who have achieved relative success on foreign soil. This research provided the opportunity for a previously overlooked population, those who did not or had yet to attain success on

foreign soil, to enter the discussion and determine if differences existed between post-hoc and pre-migration reasons for athlete migration. The decision to conduct this pre-migration analysis was made in the attempt to avoid any selection bias based on future achievement. As well as capturing initial motivations for migration and not their perceptions of their motivations to migrate years after the decision was made and success was achieved. By assessing these decisions at the present time, the fading or yielding of the players' initial motivations to migrate will not be lost with time nor impacted by their success or lack of success as they move forward in their careers. In addition to the issue of motivation of the Dominican players, the movement of a these migrant workers must be analyzed through a global prism. Developing the reasons for the movement of global labor will help us to understand the priorities of the migrant workers, illuminate the benefits they see in the migration decision, and allow us to create a more complete picture or the migration rationale.

In order to pursue the research purpose, the theoretical framework is presented in the next section, outlining Magee and Sugden's (2002) sets of motivations of athlete migration. The methods are outlined next, followed by the findings. The discussion explains how this research extends the athlete migration literature, specifically through examining how players who have yet to achieve success on foreign soil, rather than those well into their careers, interpret the reasons behind their decision-making process. Finally, conclusions are offered regarding the implications for sport management practitioners, educators, and researchers.

**Theoretical Framework**

**Athlete Migration**

Athlete migration is the movement of athletes from their country of birth or long-term residence to another country in order to earn a living playing a specific sport (Bale, 1991). This migration occurs in professional sports across the globe for a variety of reasons, from a desire to pursue financial riches to a desire to compete against the best athletes in the world (Klein, 1991; Magee & Sugden, 2002; Maguire, 1999). Based on his study of English professional soccer players, Maguire (1999) identified several sets of motivations that reflected the primary reasons for migration of the athletes, including: 1) Pioneers, individuals who introduce new sports to new areas of the world; 2) Settlers, players who bring their sporting ability with them and stay in the society in which they migrated to for extended periods and often beyond the completion of their playing careers; 3) Mercenaries, individuals who are motivated by personal gains, which are generally financial, and may resemble nomads in the movement from team to team; 4) Nomads, individuals who use their sporting career to engage in new experiences in foreign lands, and; 5) Returnees, which represents players who spent a period of time competing in another country and then return to compete on home soil. Magee & Sugden (2002), who also studied English professional soccer players, expanded on Maguire's sets of motivations by adding three additional motivations: Ambitionist, Expelled, and Exile. Ambitionists are players who want to achieve a professional career anywhere in the world, desire to play in a specific league abroad, or are seeking to play in any of the top flight leagues. Expelled players are forced to migrate due to situations that they have created in their home country (i.e. sport suspension). Exiled athletes are individuals who leave their homeland to pursue a career due to threats to their professional career or personal freedom, and/or political instability in their home country. Magee & Sugden

(2002) also removed the Pioneer and Returnee category from their analysis since their participants included players who were in the midst of their playing career in English soccer. As England is recognized as the birthplace of soccer (FIFA, 2012), the pioneer category does not lend itself to their research and players who are in the midst of their international careers they have not yet returned to their homeland.

As professional baseball is well established in the United States and the migration decision being studied in this research was from the Dominican Republic to the United States, the Pioneer and Returnee categories were also irrelevant in this study. Magee & Sugden (2002) also suggested categories which define a player in their early career may fade or yield to alternative motivations as the player progresses through their career and approaches retirement. With this in mind, it behooves us to understand that these sets of motivations were designed to sensitize us to specific areas of emphasis and should not be used as a tool to assign a particular athlete or a particular group of athletes to any of the ideal types, as this would mitigate the complex motivations of these individuals (Stead & Maguire, 2000)

Much of the previous research on athlete migration has focused on migration patterns of international athletes, which included the chartering and analyzing of the historical ties between the country of origin and the destination country and how these ties impact modern migration decisions (Arbena, 1994; Darby, 2007; Molnar, 2006; Lanfranchi & Taylor, 2001; Maguire & Pearton, 2000a; McGovern, 2000; Moorhouse, 1994; Taylor, 2007). Additionally, a large portion of this research (Darby, 2007; Lanfranchi & Taylor, 2001; Maguire & Pearton, 2000a; McGovern, 2000; Molnar, 2006; Magee & Sugden, 2002; Mason, 1994; Taylor, 2007) focused on the European football

with scant attention given to examining other sport settings (e.g. rugby, cricket,

professional basketball) (Agrergaard, 2008; Bale, 1991; Elliot & Maguire, 2008).

Bale (1991) studied the migration of student-athletes to the United States from

other countries, examining both the recruiting process and the athletic and academic

experiences of student-athletes. Bale (1991) discovered networks and methods of

recruiting aimed directly at foreign-athletes and four aspects of the adaptation process

that he believed foreign student-athletes could encounter in their new environment, which

included cultural adjustment, identification, cultural competence, and role acculturation.

Critics (Arbena, 1994; Bale & Sang, 1994; Darby, 2007; Klein, 1994) have argued athlete

migration negatively impacts the sport's development in the migrated nations, and has led

to continued underdevelopment of these sports and the de-skilling of the native

workforce. This de-skilling occurs through the removal of talented players from the

domestic leagues and amateur systems at a young age, thus the competition quality

among the domestic leagues and in the amateur system is of a lower level than it would

be had international player migration not been an option.

Chiba (2004) and Falcous & Maguire (2005) dealt with the question of divided

fan commitment to foreign players. They found fans of English basketball teams

understood that recruiting foreign players would increase winning percentages, but also

that these same fans preferred local players because of their commitment to the team and

community. Chiba (2004) also commented on the rationale differences between players

migrating to Japan and Japanese players emigrating to MLB. He found that the

athletic/competition dimension has been considered of greater importance than the

economic dimension for Japanese players emigrating to MLB, while monetary measures

seemed to be the most important dimension to those moving to the Asian Leagues. While Chiba's (2004) efforts are noteworthy, his analysis is based on the salaries received and not interviews with or statements by the migrating players. My research gained Dominican baseball players' first-hand accounts of their motivations to migrate to MLB, therefore enhancing our understanding about how players interpret their migration rationale prior to or during the process of making the decision. Previous research has all been conducted after the players had made a migration decision and actually migrated to their new country. The Dominican athletes in this study have not made such a decision and have not traveled to country in which they will be competing professionally.

## Research Design

**Researcher's role**

### *Technical Considerations*

One of the major technical considerations was my ability to converse with the players in Spanish. I took several steps toward this goal prior to conceiving of this research and several steps after conceiving of the dissertation project. I studied Spanish for three years during my high school career, two semesters during my undergraduate studies, and a non-credit class at the University of Miami during my Master's program. After developing the dissertation project, I worked with the Rosetta Stone software (Rosetta Stone, 2013), studied  nine months of Spanish language classes at a Spanish language institute in Minneapolis, and spent the six weeks prior to entering the academy living in Santiago, Dominican Republic working one-on-one with an instructor to hone my Spanish language skills.

### *Positionality*

This study began with two assumptions which may have influenced interpretation of participant responses. The investigator assumed that (a) monetary wealth would be the driving force behind Dominican academy players' decisions to migrate to the United States; and (b) the categories of exiled, expelled, and settler mentioned in the theoretical framework would be unsupported in this study. I also began with prior knowledge of literature related to athlete migration. The assumption of monetary wealth was addressed by asking the players why the wanted to play MLB and if they could play MLB or in the Dominican Winter League which they would choose. If the players choose MLB for the second question, they were then asked which they would choose if the pay was equal. The assumptions related to previously documented rationales for migration were largely eliminated, as all of the players were currently playing in the Dominican Republic, thus they could not be exiled or expelled. Being a settler was an available option, but all players spoke of returning to the Dominican Republic at some point.

### *Political Considerations*

The political considerations of this study related to working as the English Language Coordinator for the MLB team under study while also trying to conduct research about the migration decisions of their players. This situation may have affected both my final analysis of the materials and limited the responses of the participants, as all of those interviewed for the case may have viewed me as higher on the team hierarchy than themselves. During my time at the academy, I attempted to reduce response bias by explaining to the players that no one associated with the team would listen to or read their interview and to protect their identity pseudonyms were used. Based on the honesty of some responses and conversations (e.g. revealing the recent arrest of family members)

with the players, they seemed to feel that I would not break their trust and keep their responses confidential.

**Participants**

Given the nature of this case study, criterion sampling (Patton, 2002) was used. Patton (2002) argues that criterion sampling is utilized when the researcher determines specific criterion and uses all cases that fit the established criteria. Given the goal of the research was to document the migration rationale and gain meaningful responses about the players' decision-making to migrate, the criteria for sampling included only team-signed players who were in the academy during my stay. Players who left prior to my stay or arrived after were not included in the study due to time and monetary constraints. Twenty-two individuals participated in this study, all of which were Dominican males between the ages of 17 and 21-years-old and had never visited the United States. Each individual was a signed member of the MLB team I was studying and participated in the Dominican Summer League during the 2007 season. They lived in the academy in which I lived. Other team personnel were not included in this portion of the study because they did not have the power to make the actual player migration decisions.

Players were explained the details of the study during a post-practice coaches talk and invited to participate. Additionally, the players were provided a document explaining the nature of the study, their right to exclude themselves at any time, and their right to not answer any question which they did not want to answer. No players declined to participate in the study.

**Data Collection**

**Semi-Structured Interviews.**

A semi-structured interview guide was developed to assist with data collection. The guide was based on information garnered from resources that addressed the Dominican baseball academies (e.g. Klein, 1991, 1994, 2006; Ruck, 1999; Marcano & Fidler, 2002, etc.), athlete migration literature (Maguire, 1999; Magee & Sugden, 2002), and to address the research questions. Interview questions were developed with the goal exploring the players' rationales for wanting to migrate to the United States to pursue a career in professional baseball. Players were asked multiple questions about the opportunities available for professional baseball employment in the Dominican and the United States and which they would prefer. They were asked to explain these preferences and describe the feelings they believed they would have if they achieved these positions.

The guide consisted of approximately 40 questions and was created through an analysis of the literature related to athlete migration (i.e. Arbena, 1994; Bale, 1991; Falcous & Maguire, 2005; Klein, 1994; Maguire, 1999, etc.). A Dominican-native and I translated the guide from English to Spanish. I worked with this native speaking individual in Santiago, Dominican Republic prior to my entering the academy. The interview guide was organized into three parts (Appendix B), with questions in the third section directly relating to a player's motivation for migration. The first section of questions related to the general academy environment that included the players' perceptions of the academy and its coaches and staff. In the second section, questions addressed the system of baseball in the Dominican Republic, the buscones, and how they were discovered. The third section was related to personal and family issues and attempted to identify the reasons behind the players' migration decisions and difficulties that might come with their migration. Follow-up questions were used to allow the players

to explain answers in more detail and to pursue specific lines of questioning (Rubin & Rubin, 1995). The interview method was utilized because of its ability to gather information in the words of the participants and its ability to provide a better interpretation of the world being studied (Bogden & Bilken, 1998). All of the players were asked the same initial questions with follow-up questions varying from participant to participant based on their explanations for migration. By asking the players questions aimed at determining their preferences and sentiments towards specific courses of action, the goal was to elicit accurate assessments of their motives for wanting to compete professionally in the United States.

**Data Analysis**

After the data was collected, all of the interview transcripts and notes were compiled into Word documents. The data was then analyzed using the theoretical framework of Magee & Sugden (2002). The data analysis was undertaken using the thematic coding process explained by Boyatzis (1998). In this process of coding, thematic codes are generated in three different ways: "(a) theory driven, (b) prior data or prior research driven, and (c) inductive (i.e., from the raw data) or data driven" (p. 29). For this particular study, themes were developed in two of the three ways. The data was first coded in an inductive manner where the interviews were analyzed for elements relating to the players' migration decisions process. During this process, different categories were identified and grouped into themes (i.e. money, competition, travel, etc.) and references to these items were placed in the appropriate categories. After the inductive coding was complete, the Magee & Sugden (2002) framework was used to group the existing data categories into the a priori categories of 1) mercenaries; 2) ambitionists; and; 3) nomadic

cosmopolitans. I also looked for specific cases that illustrated themes and made

comparisons and contrasts between these themes (Neuman, 2003). Ideas or concepts that

did not fit the Magee & Sugden (2002) framework were grouped into new categories and

used to create new themes. Finally, the categories were determined and the best examples

were chosen to illustrate and represent each theme.

<div align="center">**Findings**</div>

Five sets of motivations were identified based on Magee's and Sugden's (2002)

framework: mercenaries, altruists, ambitionists, nomadic cosmopolitans, and lost boys.

The findings described the players' motivations to migrate to the United States and

pursue a career in MLB.

**The Mercenaries**

The mercenaries included players with a clear preference for maximizing their

earning potential via MLB and fifteen of the twenty-two players fully or partially

embraced this motivation. The mercenaries were individuals who sought the salary and

endorsement contracts, in the United States and Dominican, which were perceived to be

enjoyed by MLB players. Player One's statement defined a mercenary, "If it comes to

money: MLB; if it comes to love: Winter League" (personal communication, July 7,

2007). The players' desire to remain in their home country and compete in front of their

family and friends was secondary to the income that could be achieved in MLB. Almost

every player expressed a desire to remain in the Dominican when asked where they

would prefer to play, the Dominican Winter League or MLB, if the salaries were the

same. With strong familial and cultural ties to the island, the decision to leave the

Dominican in pursuit of wealth was not made without consternation as most players were

extremely close to their families. By choosing to pursue the greater potential financial reward over the opportunity to play baseball for a lesser financial reward but remain in their home country and close to their families, the players became mercenaries.

All players in the study were aware of even the most obscure Dominican player on an MLB roster and they similarly aimed to attain a position on a MLB roster in order obtain the monetary rewards. Player Two expressed his preference for MLB by stating:

[I want to play in the] MLB, because MLB is where the big money is. That's where every ballplayer wants to go. If the Winter League here [in the Dominican Republic] would pay more money, everyone would want to stay here. The major leagues play during eight months, they [the Dominican Winter League] only play three months here, so the season here is too short. In the major leagues the players get more famous and earn more money (personal communication, July 26, 2007).

Many mercenaries agreed with Player Two and expressed that they would prefer to remain in the Dominican Republic and not migrate to the United States. The reasons players desired to stay in the Dominican if Winter League salaries were similar to MLB salaries was their desire to remain in their homeland and play in front of their families and friends. However, the extended length of the MLB season and the larger population of the United States when compared to the Dominican, not to mention the economic discrepancies, allowed for much higher salaries to be paid in the United States than the Dominican.

The mercenaries were keenly aware that different MLB teams maintained vastly different salary structures with the New York Yankees at the top and lesser known teams (i.e. San Diego Padres and Pittsburgh Pirates) at the bottom. While they had signed with a

team, some participants openly expressed an interest in playing for other teams with a more substantial compensation system, specifically the New York teams and Boston. Some players even went as far as wearing opposing team apparel at the team complex (a violation of academy rules) and noting that their favorite team or the team they desired to play for was not their current team. While these players knew that they had likely been rejected by these teams during their tryouts and/or offered less money to sign with these teams, they believed that if they were to become an MLB free agent that they would specifically attempt to play for specific teams due to their financial reputations. Player Three explained:

> I'd like to play with the New York Mets because of the fame and the money there. The more fame you have the more you can help your family and community. Once I am in the major leagues, then I will play here (the Dominican Republic) for fun, so that my people can watch me play, but playing in MLB is better. (personal communication, July 26, 2007)

Thus, the mercenaries demonstrated that even early in their careers, well before they would even be presented with the option to be a free agent, they were aware of the financial structure of MLB teams and recognize the potential future value of pursuing signing with one of the large-market teams.

The desire to improve one's financial standing through baseball was a sentiment echoed by many of the players. Additionally, many players struggled with the brief separation from family and friends that the academy provided, but were willing to make the personal sacrifices required to reap the financial benefits that playing baseball might provide. In the end, the mercenaries will continue to pursue MLB dreams, but their

decision-making in this regard is largely influenced by their desire to earn a MLB contract.

**Altruists**

The altruists included players who were dedicated to using their potential MLB earnings to provide a better life for those in their communities, which typically lacked resources taken for granted in the United States (i.e. plumbing, easy access to medical care) and five of the twenty-two players fully or partially embraced this motivation.. According to the altruists, playing in MLB was "better" than playing in any other league because they would be able to earn a higher compensation, which would allow them to help their family and community. The altruists were not solely seeking fame and fortune for personal gain, but explained that the additional money would mean a significantly better life for their families in regards to living standards, ease of life, and being able to provide the necessities (i.e. food, clothing, shelter). It also meant better opportunities for those in their communities in terms of playing fields, churches, and school supplies. Player Two went as far as saying that baseball would be unimportant if you did not make money for playing:

> First of all [baseball] is a good future, and I can take my family and myself to the next level. Nobody would play baseball if there was no money involved. We are here for the money and the hope of a better future for ourselves and our families. (personal communication, July 26, 2007).

Elevating one's family to the next level for players meant allowing their parents and siblings to not concern themselves with the day-to-day tasks of providing food, clothing,

and shelter. While all players had more grandiose desires to provide much more for their families, this was the main concern and the goal for many of the altruists.

Remuneration was a driving force for these players, but it was tempered by their goals for how they would use any future compensation. Several of the participants observed favorably how current Dominican MLB superstars gave back to their communities (e.g. building churches, constructing baseball fields, and funding schools) of origin and these players aspired to do so as well. Players spoke of building new baseball fields, providing sports equipment to their communities, and even constructing churches, similar to some of their heroes. Their personal, familial, financial security was still a major motivating factor; however, assisting their communities after achieving financial success was a major priority for a number of the players. These players often noted the family and peer support they had received to achieve their current position and how it would not have been possible without the support of others. Thus, they felt a duty to reciprocate if they could. When discussing his family situation, Player Two explained:

> Before I signed, they paid for everything. If my father did not have money, then my brother would give me some. And now I do the same, last Saturday I went home with twelve thousand pesos and said: 'You take this…here…here.' Now, they might not be at the same circumstances that I am, and I have to support them, because I wouldn't be here if it wasn't for their support; how could I ever get here without their support? (personal communication, July 26, 2007)

For the altruists, the support and security they would be able to provide their family and the benefits they may be able to provide those who are struggling in their communities was the driving force behind their migration decision. Without the

substantial monetary benefit of playing MLB, it seemed, as Player Two's quotes illustrate above, that many of these players would not have been pursuing the goal of playing MLB.

**Ambitionists**

Ambitionists were players who desired to compete against the highest level of competition and believed that MLB was the most elite level of baseball and ten of the twenty-two players fully or partially embraced this motivation. Ambitionists were a group of players who desired to test their baseball skills by competing against the most elite baseball players in the world. The players believed that MLB represented the best opportunity to achieve this goal. While financial security, a chance to experience life in the United States, lack of opportunity in the Dominican, and other personal factors may have played a role in their decision-making, a key reason they wanted to play MLB was their desire to compete against the most talented baseball players in the world. The following quote illustrates the motivations of these players.

> Since I was a little boy I´ve always liked baseball and I've always wanted to be a major leaguer. They play better there and I want to play in the United States. I want to play the against the best (Player Eleven, personal communication, August 1, 2007).

When asked to elaborate on how he knew or why MLB was better than any other league, the player explained that since the most talented players from around the world played in the United States that MLB was clearly the highest calibre league. He cited Ichiro Suzuki (Japan) and Andrew Jones (Curacao) as two examples of players from outside the United States and Dominican who left their home countries to play in the United States. He also

mentioned that a number of Venezuelans had played MLB, citing the fact that the

academy currently had five Venezuelan players on the Dominican Summer League

roster.

Player Sixteen had a similar explanation for his desire to play MLB. "In the

United States, the game is better over there. Playing here is not the same thing as when

you go over there. I want to play over there" (personal communication, August 6, 2007).

He added that one of the reasons that it was different in the United States was many of

the elite Dominicans only play in the Dominican Winter League when they are young and

need the experience and additional financial resources. Thus, the level of play in the

Dominican Winter League was inferior to that of MLB as the more established

Dominican players do not compete, as well as the lack of other international talent.

Additionally, when ambitionists were given a scenario where they had to choose either

MLB or the Dominican Winter League, all of the ambitionists chose MLB, even if their

salaries would have been equivalent because MLB is the highest level of baseball

competition.

**Nomadic Cosmopolitans**

Nomadic cosmopolitans represented players who coveted the opportunity to live

in the United States and six of the twenty-two players fully or partially embraced this

motivation. Nomadic cosmopolitans were players who would like to live in, travel to, or

otherwise experience life in the United States and believe that baseball afforded them this

opportunity. It is worth noting that none of the academy players in this research had ever

travelled to the United States. The players' desires to experience life in the United States

was based solely on the stories shared with them from friends or relatives and what they read or listened to in the media (i.e. newspapers, magazines, movies, and television).

At times this desire to experience life in the United States did not seem to be based on anything rational. As Player Nineteen (personal communication, August 9, 2007) said, "I would like to play in the United States because I like the United States. Although I have never been there, people have said they liked the United States and I would like to go there." He elaborated by stating he thought it would be "cool" to go to the United States and he liked to "experience new things." Many of these players do not truly understand much of the United States and/or its culture, but rather were motivated because of the potential (e.g. visiting new cities, experiencing a different lifestyle) that exists in the United States and a strong desire for new and different experiences.

A few participants mentioned that travelling to the United States would provide them with a chance to improve their English skills. Players who stated this had typically concluded that they were not MLB-quality, were performing poorly in their second or third Dominican Summer League season, and wanted the chance to improve their English skills. The benefit of traveling to the United States for any nomadic cosmopolitan who did not believe he would make a MLB roster was to allow him the opportunity to enhance his employability in the Dominican once his baseball career was over. Player Fifteen (personal communication, June 25, 2007) stated,

> "[English is] Important because when you are released, if you know English you can work in the Academy and if you can get to the United States you have a way of communicating in English. Also, to get a job in the Dominican, English helps a lot."

These players seemed to be looking beyond their current baseball career and how their experiences in the United States could improve their future employment prospects.

The nomadic cosmopolitans seemed to be extremely tired of the monotonous life in the academy and longed for anything different. Player Twenty-two (personal communication, May 17, 2007) mentioned that he'd like to "know" the United States, because he already knew the Dominican. "I'd like go to the United States to know the United States. I already know everything here in the Dominican Republic. I'd like to go and know how the United States is," he said. For players like this, the United States offered a new and different lifestyle from the Dominican.

For the majority of the participants in this study, their desire to go to the United States was currently motivated by what it means professionally (a promotion) not necessarily for the cultural experience of life in the United States. However, for the majority of the nomadic cosmopolitans the opportunity to travel to the United States was an experience that they would like have regardless of their playing status. If offered the chance to travel to the United States outside of their baseball responsibilities these players would gladly accept while others who would not be categorized as nomadic cosmopolitans may turn down this offer.

**The Lost Boys.**

The lost boys were comprised of players unable to fully articulate why they were pursuing a career in MLB with the intention of migrating to the United States and four of the twenty-two players fully or partially embraced this motivation. Clichés or platitudes were used to explain their logic for wanting to pursue a career in MLB. The lost boys cited some of the reasons as their contemporaries, but their lack of conviction or ability to

fully explain their rationale resulted in the creation in the lost boys category. A conversation I had with Player Seven best defines this type of player. Stating a desire to play at the MLB-level but struggling when asked to elaborate and provide a rationale for the stated desire.

I: Why do you want to play Major League Baseball?

P: Because the Major Leagues are better than what we have here.

I: Why is it better?

P: Oh, there are more fans and better things.

I: Better things like what? For example?

P: Everything is better over there.

I: What does everything mean?

P: Well, you can do commercials. You can do a lot of things you can't do here.

Here you cannot do any of that. (personal communication, July 31, 2007)

Player Four (personal communication, June 30, 2007) noted, "Since I was a kid I have wanted to be a baseball player and I have worked hard to get where I am and I carry it in my heart and in my blood." The notion that playing MLB is what the lost boys have always wanted is a common theme. Similarly, Player Fifteen (personal communication, May 30, 2007)stated , "Since I was a child I have wanted [to play MLB].  My blood, my brothers, all of my family have been ballplayers and I want to follow in their footsteps."

## Discussion

In this research on athlete migration, five dominant sets of motivations (mercenaries, altruists, ambitionists, nomadic cosmopolitans, and lost boys) emerged. Three of the sets of motivations (mercenaries, ambitionists, and nomadic cosmopolitans)

were previously developed by Magee & Sugden (2002) and were reflected in the current

research on Dominican baseball players. However, the altruist and lost boys sets of

motivations were new to the literature and represent additional motives for Dominican

baseball athletes to pursue migration.

The mercenaries were players who were motivated by earning capacity and

enhancing their personal wealth. These players preferred to remain in the Dominican

Republic if the monetary rewards were the same as in the United States, but choose to

pursue a MLB career because of its financial rewards. The primacy of the mercenary

component in this research was not surprising and supports the Magee & Sugden (2002)

framework and previous observations by Klein (1991, 2006) and Breton & Villegas

(2002), all of whom argued that financial concerns are the driving factor behind the

desire of young Dominicans to pursue a career in MLB.  Accompanying this desire to

pursue the potential wealth present in MLB was an acknowledgement by a number of

players of the personal sacrifice they would be making to achieve this goal. These players

cited the separation from family and friends and the struggles being away from home

would present, as many struggled with the brief separation required of academy

participation. This acknowledgement of the sacrifices the players would be making to

achieve the potential rewards lends support to the notion of the altruists and the multiple

motivational factors that define any migration decision.

The ambitionists, much like the Indian cricketers interviewed by Stead & Maguire

(1998), mainly wished to compete against the most talented players in the world. It is

hard to argue with the logic that MLB offers the best opportunity to play against the best.

In the world of European football, the United States -based Major League Soccer (MLS)

is a secondary league compared to the English Premier League (EPL), Italian Serie A, Spanish Primera Division (La Liga), and the German Bundesliga (Rogers, 2007). The same was true of the Dominican Winter League and all other domestic leagues (e.g. Australia, Japan, and Korea) in baseball. These leagues are secondary to MLB in quality of players, coaches, facilities, and remuneration (Kelly, 2006; Klein, 2006). Thus, in order for the Dominican players to compete against the greatest players and experience baseball at the highest level they must travel to the United States and attempt to achieve this dream by working their way through the MLB minor league system. Many Dominicans view the United States as a land of opportunity and playing in MLB is the opportunity that the ambitionists were pursuing.

The nomadic cosmopolitans did not explicitly fit with Magee & Sugden's (2002) category of players who are "motivated by a desire to experience different nations and cultures, particularly in major world cities" (p. 432); however, the nomadic cosmopolitan motivation was still focused on players who were interested in experiencing life in the United States regardless of the cities in which it would be experienced. Players in this category seemed to believe that life in the United States would offer some new component which was not present in the Dominican Academy. These players did not pause to consider or contemplate that their daily routine (e.g. breakfast, practice, snack, game, lunch, nap, weight lifting, dinner, and sleep) would be the same in either locale. For them, the experience would be different because they would be in the United States. If a player was fortunate enough to secure a position with a MLB team, these experiences may take place in several major world cities (e.g. New York, Boston, Los Angeles, Miami), but more than likely the players will spend their careers in the smaller cities and

towns (e.g. Norfolk, Toledo, Cedar Rapids, Tacoma) that populate minor league baseball. This fact did not diminish their desire to experience life in the United States. For these players it was less about the intangible experience of being in another country and encountering a new and different environment, but about the tangible benefits that could be accrued and utilized long after the experience ended.  What additionally separated the Dominican players from those in Magee & Sugden's (2002) categorization was that many of the players in the current analysis did not have the explicit goal of migrating to the United States; rather, they were seeking what being in the United States meant for their career. Traveling to the United States meant a promotion, higher compensation, recognition that they were progressing in their career, and acknowledgement from the team that they were performing well. Promotion to the United States also meant validation for the family, friends, and community that supported them and that this support had not been provided in vain. In sum, the United States meant success; remaining in the Dominican did not necessarily mean failure, but it did not mean success either. However, much like the soccer players who wanted to live in specific neighborhoods of major cities (Magee & Sugden, 2002) several of the players were interested in life in the United States outside of what a promotion to the United States might have meant for their careers. These were the true nomadic cosmopolitans.

The final two motivations (altruists and lost boys) represented in this study were new contributions to the athlete migration literature. The altruists were driven by the opportunity to provide for their families and communities. Many of the players addressed the opportunities that playing in the DSL had provided and imagined what a MLB salary could provide. The Dominican baseball literature (Breton & Villegas, 1999; Klein, 1991;

Marcano & Fidler, 2002; Regalado, 2000; Wendell, 2003), discusses players' desires to help their families and communities out of poverty. Issues relating to the other sets of motivations may have been discussed by these players, but conversations regularly turned back to what their personal success could mean for their families and communities. This idea of civic and social responsibility was pervasive for the altruists and most believed they could have a significant impact on their communities if they reached All-Star status in MLB.

One of the reasons that I believe this motivation emerged in this research, as opposed to others, was the contrast in economic backgrounds of those included in the studies. The depth of poverty in the Dominican Republic, 44 percent of people living below the poverty line in 2004, (CIA, 2006) far exceeds anything present in First World nations. While the European athletes studied in the previous literature (i.e. Lanfranchi & Taylor, 2001; Magee & Sugden, 2002; Maguire, 1996; Maguire & Pearton, 2000a, etc.) may have been poor compared to their fellow countrymen, their lifestyle would have been the envy of the majority of Dominican baseball players, as Portugal had the highest percentage of people living below the poverty line in 2004 at eighteen percent, or almost two and a half times less than the Dominican. However, the altruists may also be similar to the settler motivation proposed by Magee & Sugden (2002). Whereas the settler was a post-hoc convention based on events that transpired after migration, the altruist could be a pre-migration creation of what a player hopes they will do if the achieve their dream. The idea or dream of being able to help ones community could help a player advance their decision-making process, but the reality of what happens after a player achieves success is not determined by their pre-migration motivations.

The lost boys, like the altruists, were also a previously unexplained motivation. The idea of players wanting to pursue a professional sports career in another country due to societal and/or familial pressure was something that yet to be addressed in the literature (e.g. Maguire, 1999; Magee & Sugden, 2002). The lost boys were not void of the desire to achieve monetary success, travel to the United States, or compete against the most talented players in the world; however, these reasons were secondary to their desire not to disappoint family and community members who they believed were counting on them to succeed. Thus, it was my belief that familial and societal pressure was a key element in defining the lost boys. The absence of the lost boys in the previous literature may also have been due to the post-hoc nature of the previous research. All of the previous research on athlete migration rationale was conducted with athletes that had already experienced the migration and had reached an elite level of athletic competition in their field literature (e.g. Maguire, 1999; Magee & Sugden, 2002). Given the lack of intrinsic motivation that appeared to be present in the lost boys it is not difficult to determine that many of these athletes may drop out shortly after making their initial foray into migration and not have been available to be included in post-hoc analyses of migration rationale. It is my opinion, that these players had been conditioned to believe that playing baseball in the United States was the goal they needed to be working towards and they did not need to know or have a reason for why they needed to achieve this goal.

In relation to the previous literature (Magee & Sugden, 2002) the additional motivations of settler, exile, and expelled did not play a role in this research and would likely play little role in any analysis conducted on Dominican baseball players. The settler category is truly a post-hoc creation, as no player can determine pre-migration that

they will remain and settle in the United States prior to being able to establish themselves professionally. Settling may be a goal of the migration decision, but cannot be a reason for migration itself. The categories of exiled and expelled (Magee & Sugden, 2002) included individuals who choose to leave their home country due to reasons of professional, personal, or political threats and those who are forced to leave their country of origin. It is my understanding that these reasons have not been the cause of any Dominican baseball player leaving to pursue a career in MLB. While these categories may be supported in research on Cuban and Venezuelan players who are raised in a more dictatorial society (Echevarría, 1999), they are not supported in the present research.

The reasons Dominican players choose to migrate to the United States varied. While the vast majority of the players cited money as the driving force and all players mentioned it during their time at the academy during formal or informal conversations, it was not the only driving factor for the players. Solely focusing on the mercenaries and their financial motives omits the complexity and diversity of human interest and desires. To discount the desire of competitive individuals to compete at the highest level or the appeal of experiencing life in another country due to the general poverty of a nation and its people seems short-sighted and lacking of a true understanding of the human condition (Magee & Sugden, 2002), just as discounting the influence of the monetary potential of MLB is similarly foolhardy.

In this study specific motivations were created, yet the majority of the players considered multiple motivations in their decision-making. The financial benefits explained by the mercenaries dominated the discussion for a majority of individuals, but for most players their reasons for migration included more than one motivating factor.

Thus, the reason for migration was not solely the desire for money, travel, or competition, but the combination of these motivating factors which makes the decision to leave family and friends worth it for players, and their families, in the end.

## Conclusion

The purpose of this study was to determine Dominican Republic baseball academy players' motives to migrate to the United States to pursue a career in MLB. By responding to open-ended interview questions, players were allowed to identify reasons for their decision. The reasons that the athletes provided supported several of Magee & Sugden's (2002) motivations and led to the creation of a two new sets of motivations identified as altruists and lost boys. This research helped to provide a more complete picture of a Dominican baseball players' decision-making process than the stereotypical poor Dominican boy who dreams solely of making millions in MLB that has been advanced in most of the coverage of Dominican baseball (i.e. Breton & Villegas, 1999; Klein, 1991; Marcano & Fidler, 2002; Regalado, 2000).

While financial reward was the primary motive for migration, it was not the only consideration for these young men, as a desire to strengthen their native communities, test their abilities against the best players in the world and travel to new places played a role for many. In regards to the players who were unable to articulate the reasons behind their decisions, previous research (Agergaard, 2008; Elliot & Maguire, 2008; Magee & Sugden, 2002; Stead & Maguire, 2000) failed to identify any such athletes. Financial gain may have been the overriding goal for family and friends that advanced this agenda for the player, but it appeared that the main objective for the player was to try to gain the approval of their family and friends through the pursuit of this goal. Thus, the importance

of the goal to their family or community justified their pursuit of this goal regardless of their personal desire to achieve it.

This information could be utilized to help develop templates for MLB teams on how to work with players based on the nature of their motivation and determine if one motivating factor was more highly correlated with long-term success than another. Additionally, the nature of the motivation may lead to differing responses to the migration decision and which migration experiences would be most difficult for players to overcome. With this in mind, teams could design specific intervention or training programs to assist players in their migration experience.

Future research in this area could analyze athletes at the pre- and post-migration levels to determine if their reasons for the migration change as their status in the organization changes. For instance, research could be conducted as players move from the Dominican Summer League to the various minor league destinations in the United States to the MLB team in an attempt to determine if their motivations, or at least their thoughts of what their motivations are or were, change as they progress through the system. Additionally, interviewing players who were released at different levels of the minor league and major league system would also help to determine if level of success or dropout due to team or player decision altered or solidified their initial reasons for the migration decision. These longitudinal studies would provide teams with valuable background information on Dominican baseball players which Marcos Breton (2000) called "the last great, untold story of baseball."

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**CHAPTER 5**
**Paper 3**
**Home & Away:**
**Perceptions of Athlete Migration Difficulties from Dominican**
**Baseball Players and Major League Baseball Team Administrators**

As explained by Maguire & Falcous (2010) athlete migration is the movement of athletes from their country of birth or long-term residence (i.e. players who were born in another country, but moved to their current home country at an age after their athletic skills had developed) to another country in order to earn a living playing a specific sport in their new country (Bale, 1991). Athlete migration has occurred since at least the late nineteenth century and happens in professional sports across the globe. In Major League Baseball (MLB) athlete migration began to increase rapidly in the 1980s and has accelerated over the more recent decades (Klein, 2006). The percentage of Latino players in MLB on opening day rosters increased from 13 percent of all players in 1990 to 28.3 percent of all players in 2010 (Burns-Ortiz, 2011).

As more and more elite level athletes make the transition from their countries of origin to the United States, it is important to understand and acknowledge the difficulties players might experience (Bale, 1991; Schinke, Yukelson, Bartolacci, Battochio, & Johnstone, 2011). Schinke et al. (2011) developed a model that accounted for various factors related to elite level international athletes' adjustment to life in a new country that consisted of 1) challenges in a new community; 2) challenges in a new culture, but outside of sport, and; 3) challenges in sport contexts. Challenges in a new community addressed the feelings of separation from family, friends, and their communities of origin. Adjusting to a new culture focused on language, learning new cultural norms (i.e.

gender roles, eye contact, clothing), and social expectations. Challenges in sport contexts centered on adapting to new training methods, new teammates, new coaches, and, possibly, enhanced competition.

However, to date no research has addressed the perceived challenges athletes will face at the time of their migration during the pre-migration process. While determining which athletes are pre-migration may be a difficult in some professional sports, the Dominican baseball academies provide a suitable context to learn about pre-migration athletes. The language barrier is the most often cited difficulty for baseball players migrating to a country in which theirs is not the dominant language (Klein, 1991; Marcano & Fidler, 2002; Regalado, 2000), other difficulties (i.e. cultural competence, loneliness, separation from family) have been noted (Breton & Villegas, 1999), Research has yet to examine these athletes during this portion of the migration process to attempt to understand their thought processes. Bale (1991) and Schinke et al. (2011) both documented difficulties athletes encountered upon their migration to a new nation. Bale (1991) studied collegiate athletes perceived migration challenges and defined different aspects of adjustment into four larger categories: 1) cultural adjustment; 2) identification; 3) cultural competence, and; 4) role acculturation.

While making sound contributions to the athlete migration literature, the studies were limited in that they were conducted after the athletes had migrated and were already in the midst or had already experienced these difficulties. Other research also focused on post-migration experiences (see Bale, 1991; Bale & Maguire, 1994; Bromberger, 1994; Darby, 2007; Lanfranchi & Taylor, 2001; Magee & Sugden, 2002; Maguire & Pearton, 2000a; Maguire & Pearton, 2000b; McGovern, 2000; Miller & Redhead, 1994;

Moorhouse, 1994; Schinke et al., 2011; Taylor, 2007), not pre-migration anticipation/preparation. The difficulties in the migration process can impact a player both on and off the field. Understanding athletes' beliefs about their anticipated struggles in combining with team administrators' experiences should allow teams to develop and institute policies and procedures to serve the best interests of all players and allow them to perform at their peak with minimal distractions. The purpose of this study was to examine Dominican Republic academy players' and administrators' perceptions of challenges before migration took place. In particular, the research questions I posed were twofold: 1) what were the Dominican academy baseball players' expectations about migration to the United States; and 2) what were MLB administrators expectations of the challenges the players would encounter upon their migration to the United States. Schinke et al. (2011) studied elite athletes at both the amateur and professional levels and defined the aforementioned categories of challenges in a new community, challenges in a new culture, but outside of sport, and challenges in sport contexts. The purpose was to answer the research questions in a manner that would provide a pre-migration framework of expectations to help teams and players identify areas of need.

The next section of this paper outlines the theoretical framework that guided this study, outlining the framework proposed by Schinke et al. (2011). The methods utilized to conduct the study are next presented and followed by the findings. The study's implications in relation to Schinke et al. (2011) framework are discussed. Finally, the conclusion outlines the contributions of this research and offers recommendations for future research.

**Theoretical Framework**

**Athlete Migration**

In the past, studies of migrant athletes have explored issues such as the impact of migration on the migrated nation (Arbena, 1994; Bale & Sang, 1994; Darby, 2007a; Klein, 1994), the changing perception of individual migrants based on their sport performance (Chiba, 2004; Falcous & Maguire, 2005), the reasons why athletes choose to migrate (Magee & Sugden, 2002; Maguire, 1996, 2002), issues of self-identify and allegiance (Chiba, Ebihara, & Morino, 2001; Grainger, 2006; Maguire & Stead, 1996), and explanations of the international labor market (Lee, 2011; Maguire & Pearton, 2010; McGovern, 2002). However, little research has been conducted on the difficulties that migrant athletes encounter once they migrate to their new homelands (Agergaard, 2008; Bale, 1991; Bourke, 2002; Stead & Maguire, 2000; Ridinger & Pastore, 2000; Schinke et al., 2011; Weedon, 2011).

Agergaard (2008) addressed methods of societal/team integration used by Danish women's handball teams. In this research, Agergaard found that teams either focused on an assimilation process, where the migrant players gave up their own culture to adapt to their new culture, or a segregation process, where the migrant players maintained their own culture and minimized contact with their new culture outside of team-related activities. Weedon (2011) asked Premier League academy youth to recall their initial difficulties, which included difficulty in adjusting to the frequency, intensity and physicality of training and match play, difficulty in trying to interact with the host culture outside of the academy, homesickness and loneliness, and difficulty in learning or gaining proficiency in the host country's native language. Stead and Maguire (2000) also found the issue of loneliness as a major obstacle upon initial migration, remarking that

substantial phone bills were common in their study of football migrants. In addition to

loneliness, the ability to maintain a long-distance relationship with a significant other was

also compromised. Bourke (2002) briefly addressed acculturation stresses (absence of

family, absence of close friends, first time living away from home, too much free time,

new coaching system) experienced by Irish footballers migrating to England.

Bale (1991) studied international student-athletes and developed four aspects of

environmental adaptation that he believed they encountered during their initial migration.

These four aspects were:

1) Cultural adjustment; e.g. feeling "at home," socially interacting with the host
   group, finding satisfaction with a new lifestyle;

2) Identification; e.g., a feeling of belonging, changes in reference groups,
   formal membership of a group;

3) Cultural competence; e.g., acquiring new cultural knowledge and skills;

4) Role acculturation; e.g., the active use of the home language, the desire to
   conform to culturally defined modes of behavior (p. 125).

Bale (1991) also argued that foreign student-athletes would adjust more quickly than

typical international students due to their built in group affiliation and assistance from

teammates in making the necessary cultural adjustments and gaining cultural

competence. While this may also be the case for the Dominican baseball players, the

focus remains on the difficulties they and the administrators believed they would

encounter and not how well or quickly they adjusted after migration.

Understanding the limitations of the above literature, Schinke et al. (2011) was

chosen as the framework for this study given the use of elite level professional and

amateur athletes. Schinke et al. (2011) developed a model that accounted for various factors related to elite level international athletes' adjustment to life in a new country that consisted of 1) challenges in a new community; 2) challenges in a new culture, but outside of sport, and; 3) challenges in sport contexts. Challenges in a new community addressed the feelings of separation from family, friends, and their communities of origin. Adjusting to a new culture focused on language, learning new cultural norms (i.e. gender roles, eye contact, clothing), and social expectations. The challenges in sport referred to adjusting to the new training and/or play requirements and team social norms. The study of athletes in various sports and various age groups provided a well-rounded dataset that I believed more accurately reflected the Dominican baseball players than studies of solely collegiate athletes who, more than likely, possessed academic, and potentially coping skills, that the Dominican baseball players did not.

## Research Design

**Researcher's role**

*Technical Considerations*

One of the major technical considerations was my Spanish proficiency. Prior to and after confirming the location and nature of this research, I took several steps toward gaining Spanish proficiency. In high school and during my bachelor's degree I enrolled in Spanish language classes for eight semesters. While earning my Master's degree I completed a non-credit class at the University of Miami. When the concept for the dissertation was outlined, I began working with Rosetta Stone language software, enrolled in bi-weekly Spanish language classes at a Spanish language institute in Minneapolis, and then spent the six weeks prior to entering the academy living in

Santiago, Dominican Republic working one-on-one with an instructor to further develop

my Spanish language skills.

*Positionality*

The assumptions which may have influenced interpretation of participant

responses for this study were, that (a) language and (b) increased level of competition

would be a major difficulties associated with the migration process. It was assumed that

both players and administrators would acknowledge both of these issues, with

administrators focusing more on increased level of competition than the players. I also

began with prior knowledge of literature related to migration literature. These biases were

largely eliminated through the construction of the questionnaire utilized in the interview

process which allowed players and administrators to provide their own answers to the

questions without promoting. In the analysis of the data, the issue of language was

discussed by almost all of the individuals interviewed, while increased competitive level

was rarely mentioned. This is reflected in the findings.

*Political Considerations*

The political considerations of this study focused on working as a MLB team's

English Language Coordinator while concurrently conducting research about the

anticipated difficulties for players migrating to the United States. The impact of this

situation may have been two-fold as it may have impacted my final analysis of the

materials and limited the responses of the player participants. The responses of the player

participants may have been limited because the players may have viewed me as helping

them prepare for their migration and did not want to cite areas as concerns where I was

attempting to provide support. Responses may also have been limited because players

could have been concerned with the issue of confidentiality. In regards to confidentiality, player responses contain potential for having been abbreviated or focused on the common concerns addressed by team management in order to protect themselves from labeling as a player that would be unfit for migration. Given my role within the academy structure, players may have perceived that I was attempting to determine which players had specific concerns and report this information to the team which could potentially impact any future promotion of said player. I attempted to reduce the lack of confidentiality response bias by explaining to the players that no one associated with the team would listen to or read their interviews and all players would be given pseudonyms for the final presentation of the data. Based upon the willingness of players and administrators to participate and answer all questions, all individuals appeared to believe that I would not break their trust and keep their responses confidential. Additionally, given the seasonal nature of my position with the team, I do not believe the administrators were very concerned with these matters.

**Participants**

Patton (2002) advises using criterion sampling when the researcher determines specific criterion and uses all cases that fit the established criteria. Based on this description, criterion sampling (Patton, 2002) was used in this research. Sampling for this article included both players and administrators since the goal of the research was to document the potential migration difficulties experienced by players. Administrators who had either experienced or witnessed the migration of Dominican players to the United States were utilized. All thirteen administrators participated in this study, all of whom worked directly for the MLB team under study and had witnessed or experienced the

migration for the Dominican to the United States. Additionally, only team-signed players

who were in the academy during my stay were included. Players who left prior to my stay

or arrived after were not included in the study due to time and monetary constraints. All

22 of the players who participated in this study were Dominican males between the ages

of 17 and 21-years-old and had never visited the United States. Each player was also a

signed member of the MLB team I was studying and participated in the 2007 Dominican

Summer League and lived in the academy in which I lived.

Players were explained the details of the study during a post-practice coaches talk

and invited to participate. Administrators were explained the details of the study during

face-to-ace meetings and invited to participate. Players and administrators were also

distributed a paper explaining the nature of the study, their right to exclude themselves

from the study at any time, and their right to not answer any question which they did not

want to answer. No player or administrator rejected the invitation to participate in the

study and all were willing to tell their story.

**Data Collection**

**Semi-Structured Interviews.**

A semi-structured interview guide was developed to enhance data collection and

was based on information garnered from resources that addressed the Dominican baseball

academies (e.g. Klein, 1991, 1994, 2006; Ruck, 1999; Marcano & Fidler, 2002, etc.),

previous research on athlete migration (Agergaard, 2008; Bale, 1991; Bourke, 2002;

Stead & Maguire, 2000; Ridinger & Pastore, 2000; Schinke et al., 2011; Weedon, 2011),

and to address the research questions. Interview questions were developed with the goal

exploring athlete migration difficulties and discovering what the administrators and players anticipate will be difficult for the players during their initial migration.

The administrator guide consisted of approximately 30 questions (Appendix A) and the players guide consisted of approximately 40 questions (Appendix B). Each guide was broken down into three distinct parts. The administrator guide focused on the general Dominican academy environment, talent identification, and player migration issues and decisions. The player guide addressed the general Dominican academy environment, the system of baseball in the Dominican Republic as it relates to MLB, and migration decisions and difficulties.

When the answers provided by the players or administrators were in need of further explanation, these issues were addressed with the use of follow-up questions (Rubin & Rubin, 1995). The purpose of the interviews and follow-up questions was to further explore answers and provide greater depth and context to the topics being addressed (Bogden & Bilken, 1998). All of the players and administrators were asked the same initial questions with follow-up questions varying from participant to participant based on the nature of the responses.

**Data Analysis**

Following the data collection, the interview transcripts and field notes were saved into Word documents. The theoretical framework of Schinke et al. (2011) was then used to analyze the data. The thematic coding process was described by Boyatzis (1998) was used in the data analysis. Thematic codes can be generated in three different ways: "(a) theory driven, (b) prior data or prior research driven, and (c) inductive (i.e., from the raw data) or data driven" (Boyatzis, 1998, p. 29). Themes were developed in two ways for

this study. The interviews were analyzed in an inductive manner where elements relating to migration difficulties were coded. In this process, various categories were identified and grouped into themes (i.e. on-field, off-field, etc.). References to these themes were placed in the corresponding categories. Following the inductive coding, the Schinke et al. (2011) framework was used to assign the existing data categories into the a priori categories of challenges in a new community, challenges in a new culture, but outside of sport, and challenges in sport contexts. During this process, I examined the data for specific cases that clarified themes and made comparisons and contrasts between the existing themes (Neuman, 2003). The ideas that did not fit the Schinke et al. (2011) framework were used to create new themes. Finally, the best examples were selected to demonstrate and embody each theme.

## Findings

The findings were organized into categories created by Schinke et al. (2011) (challenges in a new community, challenges in a new culture, but outside of sport, challenges in sport contexts) and an additional category (machismo). The responses of the players were presented in the above stated order with sections for player explanation first, followed by administrator explanations. The players and administrators were all cited in the challenges in a new community, challenges in a new culture, but outside of sport, challenges in sport contexts; however, only the players were cited in the machismo category, as this idea was not expressed by any of the administrators.

### Challenges in a New Community

Challenges in a new community addressed separation from family, friends, and the player's community of origin. Both the players and the administrators addressed the

difficulty that would arise for the players in their new communities. The players focused

on the actual separation from their family, while the administrators focused on the length

of the separation.

**Players.**

The idea of being separated from one's family for an extended period[13] of time

was something many of the players addressed, as for many of them their stay in the

academy was the longest period they had ever gone without seeing their families.

Separation had little to do with loneliness or disconnectedness in their explanations, but

more about the actual physical and spatial separation that was present in their current

academy lives and would be even more distinct after their migrating. While distance and

duration may be separate issues, players typically spoke of the two issues in conjunction

with one another as the separation would be difficult not only because of the distance, but

also because of the duration of the separation. For some of the players, the distance

between the academy in Boca Chica and their hometown was a substantial distance;

while for others, the duration of six days away from home was enough to create a longing

for family and friends. The entwined nature of these two concerns led to the players

focusing on these challenges that would be presented by migrating to their new

community in the United States.

When Player Eight (personal communication, July 31, 2007) was asked what

difficulties he anticipated if promoted to the United States, he succinctly stated, "Being

far from my family, that's what's going to be difficult. I cannot think of anything more

difficult for me." When asked why this would be so difficult the player further explained

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[13] Extended periods of time for the purposes of this study are more than six consecutive weeks.

that he, like many of his counterparts, had never been away from home for any

significant period of time and did not know how he was going to respond. He believed he

would be able to manage the difficulties that this obstacle would present, but was still

wary of the prospect of moving so far from home.

Even the short distances and durations that separated the players from their

families in the Dominican posed challenges for the players and expectations were that

these issues would be heightened once the players migrated to the United States. Player

15 (personal communication, August 2, 2007) similarly stated that life will be difficult

away from his family, "You are arriving in a new country and you are unfamiliar with it.

It is going to be very difficult for me and for my family to be apart." Some players found

even the distance between the academy and their homes to be too great, at times. For

instance, when Players 11 and 17 were asked during the same interview what they would

like to change or what they would like to have at the academy that was not there at the

present time, both players stated they would like to have their mothers with them. Player

11 (personal communication, August 1, 2007) said, "The only thing I want and do not

have here is my mother, who is not close," while Player 17 (personal communication,

August 6, 2007) said, "[I want] my mother. Because my mother is nice to me and

motherly love is always needed."

**Administrators.**

The administrators told anecdote after anecdote about how the duration of time

away from family and friends took a toll on players, especially during their first or second

year of migration. Administrators felt that separation could cause a player to lose focus

towards the end of a long season. For example, after an eight-month initial season in the

United States, Administrator One (personal communication, September 18, 2007) explained that he believed one newly migrated Dominican player was "worn out." He believed the player was worn-out not from the baseball, but from being away from his family. He stated, "[Name redacted] is ready to go home, see his family, and get a home-cooked Dominican meal." The administrators were aware of the loss of focus and negative performance impact which they believe was contributed by extended separation from family.  They believed long seasons and separation from family to be a major issue for young Dominican players and one that was not easily resolved.

**Challenges in a New Culture, but Outside of Sport**

Challenges in a new culture focused on three key sub themes: adjusting to the culture as a whole (i.e. financial awareness, transportation, grocery shopping) and social expectations and the language barrier. The players discussed how their general unfamiliarity with the United States (i.e. food and customs) and their lack of knowledge of the English along their inability to speak English would be a challenge for them once they arrived. The main issues that the administrators identified were the cultural challenges of unfamiliarity and adjustment and how the language barrier would impact socialization. Administrator Three (personal communication, September 18, 2007) mentioned components of each of these issues in his initial assessment of migration difficulties, "Probably three things, one is that you are away from home and sometimes you get homesick. The language is the other one, and probably getting used to the food."

**Cultural Adjustment.**

*Players.*

Players were concerned about the uncertainty in what to expect when living in the United States. Player 15 (personal communication, August 2, 2007) stated, "You are arriving in a new country and you are unfamiliar with it. It is going to be very difficult for me." Since none of the players in the academy had previously traveled to the United States, their American cultural knowledge emerged through stories told by relatives and friends that had visited or lived there and through music, television shows, and movies. The players knew that these cultural touchstones to the United States would do little to prepare them for what they would experience upon arrival and that the differences between the Dominican and the United States would initially present a challenge. This was clearly apparent during the culture and language classes as the students asked questions about transportation, insurance, housing, and grocery shopping and were at times stunned by the explanations provided of life in the United States. Car insurance was a specific point of interest for players. The players stated that most drivers in the Dominican did not possess such insurance and that it was optional in the Dominican. Players also found understanding the different monetary systems difficult. They understood that dollars were more valuable than Dominican pesos, but could not fully grasp the concept that their pay in dollars when living in the United States would not afford them the same or similar luxuries that a similar number of dollars would provide in the Dominican.

As Player 15 did above, many others also acknowledged that the first few months in the United States would probably be the toughest months of their lives. A lack of direct familial contact and cultural awareness would present a burden upon the players that they had never before experienced. Several players explained how coming to the Dominican

academy and being away for the first time was a significant adjustment and that they

were again concerned about how they would handle these challenges given that their

family would not be, at most, a four hour bus ride away. Player Four explained that while

English was a substantial roadblock for most of the players to overcome, adjusting to

their new environment, in terms of players being able to take care of themselves by

socializing outside the team and learning to navigate the communities they would be

living in, was a key element to their success in the United States.

*Administrators.*

Administrators perceived that newly migrated players would encounter a

cornucopia of difficulties including learning the language to learning to drive and from

learning new social norms to managing a checking account. Administrator Five (personal

communication, September 20, 2007) noted some of the issues that previous players had

dealt with upon arrival to the United States,

> We've had guys that say they can't sleep when they get here, the food's different,
>
> they have to have more responsibility, and they aren't really always told what to
>
> do, like they are down there [in the Dominican]. I'd say that's the biggest
>
> adjustment. The playing stuff they're prepped for, it's the off the field stuff that
>
> they have to learn. And now here, they're taking control a little bit in the GCL
>
> (Gulf Coast League), but when they go to [an advanced minor league team], then
>
> they have to go find a place to live, they have to pay rent, it's a whole new
>
> ballgame. And that could be where we're losing some guys, they get to be on their
>
> own for the first time and American women, oh Christ, you could go on… it's
>
> like anything else, you can prep for it as much as you want but until you give

them a situation, a McDonald's, a bank, and they actually have to do it, it's like

running a computer, if I tell you how to run it, if I'm showing you push this

button, push that button, it doesn't work, but if I sit on there and try to figure it

out then I learn.

Given the scope of the adjustment described by Administrator Five, it was possible to see

how some players became lost both on and off the field during their initial migration.

Learning the American way of life or the "system" of how things worked in the

United States versus how they worked in the Dominican Republic and being able to

figure out what was and was not acceptable behavior in non-team social situations was

also a perceived issue.

[In the Dominican Republic], you drive the car, you eat something, you throw the

napkin out the window. In the United States, you can't do that. Here, in the D.R.,

when people go to the bank they don't make a line; in the United States, they have

to make line. It's different. It's a different system and [the players] are not used to

it. Plus, of the players who sign [a contract], 98 percent went to school for only a

few years, not college, but the lower grades and they don't have the education and

sometimes they make a lot of mistakes in the States because they don't know and

they think it's acceptable (Administrator 10, personal communication July 25,

2007).

Another administrator said that there are many issues that may arise, but that learning

how to treat people was typically an issue for players.

Maybe before it was a matter of language, the cultural change, the change of

habits, food, but it's also getting used to treating people with more respect, which

sometimes you do not see here [in the Dominican Republic]. But all that has to be

taken into account to be incorporated in your personality, because if you don't,

that transition generates problems not only on the field but outside baseball as

well (Administrator Nine, personal communication, September 21, 2007).

Developing culturally accepted habits was also a concern for Administrator Five

(personal communication, September 20, 2007), who said,

…cleanliness to them is a little different than what we think is clean, stuff like

that. You know, we had a guy here that left out his vegetables in a drawer and

ants all over. They're used to that shit; it doesn't even bother them. Just throws

his food in a drawer and lets it rot, but that's what they grew up with, so it's no

big deal, I learned that when I was managing in rookie ball, I was all over this one

guy and I said, 'man, you gotta clean your room' and then [the General Manager]

told me, listen, 'the guy signed in a dirt floor home, he thinks it's clean'. You

have to learn to identify the culture sometimes too.

All of the administrators identified the cultural challenges as the most formidable

barriers that the players faced in adjusting to life in the United States, regardless of their

English ability. The adjustment to the American way of life is something that they all

recognized would have a substantial impact on every newly migrated player.

Additionally, the administrators believed that adapting to the cuisine in the United States

would pose a difficulty for the players. While not a lasting concern, it was an issue that

they believed would provide some transitional difficulties for almost all of the players.

Administrator Five (personal communication, September 20, 2007) noted,

The food does not become a barrier after a while, but it is initially. They are

mostly rice and beans guys and it takes some time to start adjusting to other food.

It takes their system a little time to adjust to get assimilated and they have

diarrhea and problems from food they've never eaten before … that's probably

the biggest hurdle in the beginning.

**The Language Barrier.**

*Players.*

Every player, except the two that were extremely skilled in English prior to my

arrival, stated that their understanding of and ability to speak English would be their

greatest challenge in acculturating to the United States. Player Four (personal

communication, July 30, 2007) stated that he believed,

 (Learning English) is something that would be the water for one to survive in the

United States. If you do not know English then you have to do everything by

signaling what you want and that is stupid. It is best to remedy it since you have a

chance to do so and work hard because if you do not speak English you can't

make friends and you can't do anything.  Here, we emphasize on the field, on the

field but the truth is that it is not only on the field.  Sometimes you have to go out

and get away from the field to feel better.

Thus, learning English to allow the players to socialize with those outside the team and

get out of the team environment was something the players recognized was a necessity.

At the Dominican academy, players could easily socialize with those outside of the

academy, as they spoke the same language. This provided the opportunity to go to

restaurants, attend movies, go shopping, and engage in social and personal relationships

with those outside of the team. A failure to learn English would present barriers to these

activities once they arrived in the United States.

Player Nineteen (personal communication, August 7, 2007) agreed with Player

Four about the importance of English away from the field, "Only the English [will be

difficult for me] because people are going to be speaking in English all the time and since

I hardly know any, that is going to be difficult." Player 22 (personal communication,

August 8, 2007) simply stated that, "Asking for something in English if you do not know

what it is," would be difficult for him. Thus, the focus of language was in these instances

aimed at developing and maintaining the basic survival skills (i.e. ordering food in a

restaurant, understanding questions at a bank or grocery store) that would be necessary in

the United States. Many players believed that these social interactions that would take

place outside of the internal team environment would be more difficult than internal team

communication. They largely believed this because they knew that other players and

some coaches spoke Spanish and would be able to translate it was the time the players

would be away from the team environment that worried them the most. Player 21

(personal communication, August 8, 2007) explained that the difficulty with English

would subside with his immersion into the United States culture and English language.

> The first months are going to be hard because of English. Then you start learning
>
> slowly, but you have to know some words from [the academy]. But [in the United
>
> States] you learn with the same ballplayers and they tell you what this is and what
>
> that is. The ballplayers who go from the Dominican don't know much English.
>
> ***Administrators.***

The language barrier was the most discussed area of adjustment for the players

mentioned by the administrators. The majority of team administrators spoke little to no

Spanish and always required a translator when communicating with the Dominican

players at the Dominican academy and constantly wished the players spoke better

English. In the United States, the administrators expect the players to comprehend and

understand English. Additionally, the administrators realized that while English would

assist the players greatly from a performance standpoint, it would also allow them to

communicate more successfully with their non-Spanish speaking teammates, and others

in the community, off-the-field.

Administrator Six (personal communication, September 20, 2007), who had

played abroad in several countries, deemed the language adjustment the most difficult

thing for the players. He believed that the importance of language lay not solely in being

able to speak English to a coach, but in the player being able to understand what was

being said to them regardless of the situation.

> Language, obviously. Language is huge … being in a different country, feeling
>
> like you're an outcast and all of a sudden the language barrier is the toughest
>
> thing, not just for them, they can communicate but to communicate to them  …"
>
> (Administrator Six, personal communication, September 20, 2007)

Thus, the element of feeling like an outcast could tie back to exacerbating situations of

family separation and a lack of cultural adjustment overall. Administrator 12 (personal

communication, August 13, 2007) echoed the sentiments of Administrator Six on the

difficulties that players would face in the United States,

The language. The language is the most difficult thing because the coaches try to

help you in the field, but when you go to a store nobody is there with you to help

you with the prices and with what you want to buy. It's such a cultural change,

from day one and it affects you a lot.

All of the administrators were rich with stories about former Dominican players who

migrated to the United States and never left their apartment except for games and

practices, or ate the same food every day for months on end because they did not know

any other English words. While the ability to speak English served these players from a

professional standpoint, it was the importance of English in terms of their ability to cope

and socialize in a new environment which most concerned administrators.

Within this concern for the players' ability to adjust and adapt to their new

environment, Administrator Two (personal communication, July 20, 2007) analyzed the

situation differently. He did not believe that the language barrier per se was the major

issue, but how the players' approached or reacted to their inevitable linguistic mistakes.

He believed the major issue was making sure the players were not afraid to make

mistakes with the language when they arrived in the United States. He understood that

the players would probably never speak perfect English but if they were not willing to

make mistakes they would never even speak English.

The biggest challenge is for them to not be afraid. To come here and feel at home

and understand that everybody here is one their side, we're here to help you,

we're not here to screw you, and then you can be who you are … (Administrator

Two, personal communication, July 20, 2007).

**Challenges in Sport Contexts**

Challenges in sport contexts in Schinke et al. (2011) referred to adjusting to the new training and/or play requirements and team social norms. While these areas might be of concern to athletes that have already migrated, they largely failed to appear in any of the current research. Additionally, the administrators also largely excluded sport challenge issues from their discussions. The only issue that addressed challenges in the sporting context was the players' ability to speak English and how this could impede or help advance their careers.

**Players.**

Many players acknowledged that their English language capacity might have an impact on their chance at promotion and influence their success on the field. These players echoed the above reasons for the importance of learning English, but provided these additional reasons. Player Two (personal communication, July 26, 2007) stated that his novice language skills could potentially impact his on field performance because he would not always be able to understand the instruction that a coach might be providing.

> I think the most difficult thing for me is that I do not speak English very well, and that's going to be one of the harder things. Sometimes the indication of a move, or a fundamental, it'll be in English, I'll have to wait for someone else to do it ahead of me to try to copy him.

While Player Two developed a strategy for how to initially overcome his lack of English ability, he knew that this option would not always be available to him, specifically in game situations, and that in order to enhance his chances for a long and successful career, learning English was a priority. The other players also seemed to grasp this concept, "…after baseball, [English] is the most important thing. Because …if you learn English,

then it's easier to play baseball" (Player Two, personal communication, July 26, 2007).

The players' recognized that their baseball abilities would trump their English-speaking

ability; however, they also recognized that a player's ability to learn and adjust to new

techniques and methods post-migration may ultimately depend on their ability to

understand English.

**Administrators.**

When the administrators addressed the acculturation difficulties that would be waiting for

the players after their migration to the United States, every administrator mentioned the

language barrier and the players' ability to learn English in a manner that would allow

them to compete with their American, and other international counterparts on the playing

field. This point was reiterated by Administrator 11 (personal communication, August 9,

2007) who said,

> If you don't understand what they're [American coaches and scouts] saying on the
>
> field, then they stamp you right away that you're not smart, but sometimes they
>
> [the American coaches and scouts] don't understand that it's a kid coming to the
>
> States and he barely knows how to speak Spanish correctly, so he goes to States
>
> and tries to understand what people are saying [in English], but that's hard.

Thus, the players who are able to communicate with the American players and

administrators are provided an initial advantage in first impression evaluations. While

playing ability and talent still dominates the discussion, the lack of ability to speak

English can have a pronounced impact on a player's evaluation.

**Machismo**

The last area of discussion in regards to player identified difficulties is the machismo of specific players. This notion of machismo includes all of the players who believed that nothing would be difficult for them once they arrived in the United States. There was no rationale given by these players, none of whom had ever traveled outside of their home nation, and only one of whom spoke English with any proficiency. Only a few of the players believed, or at least stated, that they felt nothing would be difficult for them if they were to be promoted to the United States. In his reasoning, Player Six (personal communication, July 30, 2007) argued that if you think it is easy, it will be easy. He stated,

> If I had to go to the United States right now, I wouldn´t find anything difficult. Everything would be easy. If you believe everything is easy, then your life gets easier there. The only thing that might be difficult for me is English. Nothing after that.

The player did allude to the fact that English may be difficult for him, but mentioned it in a flippant manner that gave the feeling that he seemed to be stating it only as a way to answer the question and appease his English instructor and not in a manner in which he actually believed in might be troublesome for him. The assumption seemed to be that he could either easily overcome these difficulties or that his talent was such that he would be catered to in the United States.

Player Six was joined in this sentiment by Player 11 (personal communication, August 1, 2007), who said, "Well Teacher, if I get to learn English before going [to the United States], nothing is going to be difficult. Nothing is difficult if you try to do it." The fact that "Teacher" was included in the response makes me believe that the Player

may have engaged in a response that he believed I wanted to hear and that his true feelings were that nothing at all would be difficult for him in the United States. Player 17 (personal communication, August 6, 2007) was the most authoritative is his lack of need for assistance with his response,

> Difficult? Difficult?  I believe that nothing [will be difficult], it's not that I am perfect, but that I can fend for myself and nothing will be difficult for me as long as I work as hard as I work here.

While the response for Player 17 may seem shocking, he was the most fluent English speaker and one of the most educated players on the team, having earned his equivalent of an American high school diploma before entering the academy, as only one other player had done. Player 17's general knowledge and English language ability may have made him feel superior to his teammates in his ability to adapt, but believing that he would face no challenges upon his arrival in the United States would seemingly mitigate his speaking and academic advantage.

## Discussion

In examining the anticipated difficulties to be experienced by Dominican players upon their migration to the United States the players and administrators focused on the three major areas: challenges in a new community, challenges in a new culture, but outside of sport, and challenges in sport contexts. Additionally, a group of players described as the Machismo failed to address any concerns they would experience upon their migration to the United States. The relative similarities between the issues raised by the players and the administrators bodes well for the players, as the administrators are the individuals responsible for installing, designing and administering the cultural and

language competency mechanisms for the players in preparation of their migration to and once they arrive in the United States. This cohesiveness should lend itself to positive player and organizational outcomes (Lussier & Kimball, 2009); however, despite the assumed cohesiveness, emphasis on specific issues was different between the two groups.

The issue of challenges in a new community, which was previously addressed by Schinke et al. (2011) and Bale (1991), was mentioned by both players and administrators in the current study. While the administrators clearly identified the feelings of family separation as an issue for the players, its importance was downplayed as many of the administrators seemed to believe that since the players had actively made the decision to leave the Dominican that these issues were somehow lessened for the players than they otherwise would have been. However, family separation was the most prominent area of concern for the majority of the players. While voluntary separation is far preferable to involuntary separation, the notion that the voluntary nature of the decision makes the separation less of an issue appeared to be faulty logic as the issue of family separation was a major challenge experienced by athletic migrants of all kinds (Bale, 1991; Bourke, 2002; Schinke et al., 2011; Stead & Maguire, 2000; Ridinger & Pastore, 2000; Weedon, 2011). Additionally, while culture awareness and language ability will likely improve throughout a player's career, hopefully mitigating these concerns as they move through their careers, separation from family is something that a player must encounter on an annual basis (Magee & Sugen, 2002). Furthermore, players who may be at the lower levels of the minor leagues, recently married, and new fathers, may find the subsequent seasons more difficult than when they first arrived in the United States. Regardless of the circumstances, many of the players expressed that family separation would be their

primary concern (Schinke et al., 2011), yet many of the administrators either did not mention it or seemingly downplayed its importance.

Challenges in a new culture, but outside of sport was specifically identified by Schinke et al. (2011), but elements of this category appear in Bale (1991), Bourke (2002), Stead & Maguire (2000), Ridinger & Pastore (2000), and Weedon (2011). This area was one where the administrators appeared to have a better understanding of the potential issues than the players. On one hand, the players intuitively knew that life in the United States would be different than life in the Dominican, but their limited knowledge of day-to-day life in the United States provided an inadequate base from which to discuss the specific ideas addressed by the administrators (Bale, 1991; Schinke et al., 2011; Weedon, 2011). On the other hand, the administrators had all at various points lived in the United States. These administrators had seen countless Dominican players attempt the transition from the Dominican to the United States. Thus, while some of the cultural challenges, such as the food adjustment (Schinke et al., 2011), that were recognized by the administrators and not the players were important, I do not believe that they were important enough to impact the players' ability to adjust in the long-term (Schinke et al., 2011; Weedon, 2011).

The language barrier section was split between challenges in a new culture, but outside of sport and challenges in sport contexts as it impacts players both on- and off-the-field. From an outside of sport context the language barrier focused on the necessity for players to learn English as a mechanism for survival in the United States. Their knowledge of English will serve as the avenue with which they will be able to construct a life outside of baseball and a means for them to meet their basic daily needs (i.e. ordering

food in a restaurant, understanding others in social situations). From a sport context, the language barrier focused on the necessity for the players to learn and comprehend English as a means to advance in their careers. English will be the conduit through which they receive instruction from their coaches in order to enhance their on-field performance.

Both the team administrators and the players acknowledged the initial, and perhaps extended, difficulties most players would have with the language upon their migration to the United States. (Bale, 1991; Bourke, 2002; Ridinger & Pastore, 2000; Schinke et al., 2011; Weedon, 2011). As previous research rarely addressed migration issues from an administrator and player standpoint (Weedon, 2011), a significant difference appeared between the tone of the administrators born in the United States and the administrators who had experienced the migration to the United States as a player and had to learn English during their migration process. The administrators who had experienced this process seemed to judge more harshly the players who had difficulty or were not exerting meaningful effort on acquiring English language skills. Having experienced this process themselves, these administrators knew that this was a difficult task but were also well aware that is was something that could be accomplished with hard work and dedication. Regardless of the differences between the groups of administrators, all parties, players included, recognized the social and sport benefits that would accrue to the players if they learned English (Bale, 1991; Ridinger & Pastore, 2000; Schinke et al., 2011; Weedon, 2011). However, given the number of Spanish-speaking players throughout minor league baseball and the increasing number of Spanish-speaking

coaches the value of the players' English-speaking ability may decline in regards to on-field performance (Klein, 2006).

The new contributions to the athlete migration literature threefold: 1) the pre-migration interview process; 2) the development of a class of players who believed they would experience no difficulties upon their migration, and; 3) the lack of broad-based inclusion of adjustment to elevated levels of athletic competition. In regards to the pre-migration interview process, this was the initial research that asked the athlete prior to their migration on what challenges they believed they would face upon their migration. Previous research (i.e. Bale, 1991; Bourke, 2002; Schinke et al., 2011; Stead & Maguire, 2000; Ridinger & Pastore, 2000; Weedon, 2011) asked participants to recollect the difficulties they encountered after the fact with little to no concern for individuals beliefs of the difficulties prior to their migration. Additionally, the development of a group of players who believe they would have no difficulties was something that could only be discovered during pre-migration research. This was also a surprising discovery given the differences in culture and language between the United States. Perhaps a strong belief in the individual players' ability to adapt was a driving force for this category, regardless it was a surprising development. However, this development could also have been created by players that believed I would share my findings with the team administrators to help the administrators in their determination of which players would be promoted, retained, or released at the end of the season. Given the small number of players that exclaimed this, it must be considered as a possibility.

The last contribution was the dearth of discussion from both the players and the administrators about the players adjusting to an elevated level of competition (Bale,

1991; Schinke et al., 2011; Ridinger & Pastore, 2000; Weedon, 2011), as most players were moved from the professional baseball system due to lack of on-field performance and not ancillary issues (i.e. homesickness, lack of cultural awareness, or lack of language abilities). All the players were aware that the competition was elevated and players were more elite in the United States, but very few of them believed they would face any difficulty on the field once they arrived in the United States. Since a promotion to the United States typically required a strong performance in the Dominican Summer League the notion of being able to compete immediately was an understandable point of view. Generally, the promoted players had performed at a high level and dominated their previous level competition; however, all players, not solely the players who would be promoted were included in this study. The confidence displayed by the elite performers permeated all performance levels, from the best to the worst. Only one player mentioned potential difficulties on the playing field as a result of their migration and not one administrator mentioned on-field difficulties as an issue for recently migrated players.

In relation to the previous research, the majority of difficulties anticipated by the players and addressed by the administrators did correspond to research Schinke et al. (2011) and others (e.g. Bale, 1991; Ridinger & Pastore, 2000; Weedon, 2011). Learning the language (Bale, 1991; Ridinger & Pastore, 2000; Schinke et al., 2011) and being away from family and friends (Bale, 1991; Schinke et al., 2011; Weedon, 2011) were issues cited by both players and administrators, with players placing the emphasis on being away from family and friends which the administrators appeared to downplay. The language barrier was the most often cited difficulty for players and administrators and the most obvious migration hurdle that the players would face. Cultural adjustment ((Bale,

1991; Schinke et al., 2011) was also a key issue discussed by players and administrators with the administrators who had seen migrations of players in the path identifying particular ideas (e.g. food and opening a bank account) and the players dealing in larger abstracts (e.g. fitting in socially).

## Conclusion

The purpose of this study was to investigate the potential difficulties that players in the Dominican Summer League believed they would face upon their migration to the United States and the difficulties that MLB team administrators believed the players would face based on their experience with players who had made this transition. By responding to open-ended interview questions, players and administrators revealed specific areas they believed would be difficult in regards to the players' initial transition from the Dominican academy to minor league baseball in the United States. The areas discussed by the players and administrators supported several of the difficulties previously reported by Schinke et al. (2011) and revealed a group of players who believed they would have no difficulties adjusting to their new surroundings. Additionally, this research helped provide a pre-migration description of what the players anticipate will be difficult for them upon migration and an outline of issues the administrators deemed pertinent to migration adjustment.

While language, the challenges of separation from family, friends, and community, and developing cultural awareness were addressed by both the players and the administrators it should be noted that these categories each received a differing level of emphasis from these groups. Players were more acutely attuned to how their separation from family and friends would impact them, while the administrators focused on the

cultural awareness and language categories and seemed to downplay the separation between player and family due to the active decision on the part of the player to pursue a career in MLB. The administrators may be correct in focusing their attention on the cultural awareness and language categories due to their experience in this realm, but they must also maintain an awareness of the players' concerns. Furthermore, teams could use the findings of this research to work with their players to develop and implement meaningful measures to assuage the separation anxiety that players will likely experience during their migration. Additionally, MLB could consider creating a turn-key language and cultural development program that can be implemented to help Dominican players understand the difficulties that await them after migration and best practices on how to handle these difficulties. By alerting the players to the potential challenges, helping them prepare for these issues, and assisting the players in handling these issues during their migration process MLB teams could potentially lessen the individual burdens placed upon migrant athletes. Additionally, MLB teams could develop Dominican residential communities at their various minor league affiliates where players from the Dominican live with Dominican families to ease the initial transitional burden.

Future research in this area could analyze the steps teams are taking to address these issues and monitor how effective they are in eliminating or minimizing the negative experiences of Dominican baseball players during their initial migration to the United States. Longitudinal research could also be conducted on players who continually migrate between the Dominican and the United States to determine which issues continue for extended periods during their career, which issues dissipate, and which issues arise for players as they progress in their careers. Furthermore, interviewing players at various

points during their career may highlight issues that they or the team did not believe would

be difficult for them. Additionally, new issues may have developed over the years that

impacts existing or defines new categories for research. This longitudinal research will

also provide the players an opportunity to reflect on the difficulties they experienced and

how they handled them. This option would also provide a framework for difficulties

players may face based on their life situations. For instance, players who initially

migrated as single males in their late teens or early twenties may not have the same

anxiety or loneliness issues that a married player in their mid-20s that is still in the minor

leagues and unable to afford to bring his family over for the season may face. However,

the reverse could also be true as the players and their families grow accustomed to these

extended periods of separation. This research would also provide a valuable tool to team

administrators looking to better prepare their Dominican players for migration to the

United States and be useful in the development in programs that can help the players deal

with the new stressors of playing in the United States.

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# CHAPTER 6

## General Discussion and Conclusions

The selection of talented athletic individuals (Morris, 2000; Prescott, 1996; Reilly et al., 2000; 1995; Williams & Reilly, 2000) and the changing nature of the MLB workforce (Breton & Villegas, 1999; Jamail, 2008; Kelly, 2006; Klein, 1991; 2006; Kurlansky, 2010; Marcano & Fidler, 2002; Wendell, 2003) have been of interest to academics and practitioners in the realm of sport for several years. Research detailing various mechanisms for detecting talent, the rationale for athlete migration, and the difficulties to be faced by recently immigrated athletes have (Magee & Sugden, 2002; Schinke et al., 2011; Vrlgic & Mallet, 2008) advanced these areas of study. Given the workforce expansion, MLB teams have been adapting to the challenges in the Dominican Republic in terms of identifying talent and ensuring that the selected talent is able to adjust to the challenges that await them in the United States.

The international expansion of the MLB workforce led to the creation of this research which focused on three different aspects of this global workforce. The findings of this study illustrate the varied experiences and issues present in the Dominican in regards to MLB team administrators and Dominican players that were attempting to achieve their goal of playing MLB. The findings show that MLB teams have adapted to the Dominican environment in terms of talent identification mechanisms, the players possess varied motivations for wanting to pursue an MLB career, and both players and administrators have an advanced understanding of the difficulties that face the Dominican players during the migration process. The this research had a threefold purpose: 1) to determine the elements of the selection process that one MLB team uses to determine

which players enter their Dominican academy; 2) understand the reasons the Dominican

players choose to pursue a career in MLB; and 3) determine the difficulties awaiting

Dominican players in the United States as expressed by administrators, who had

witnessed or experienced this migration previously and the players, none of whom had

ever been to the United States. This research analyzed the Dominican baseball academy

process from selection to motivation to migration difficulties which enhanced our

understanding of the global MLB workforce.

Complications that evolved due to the workforce expansion have multiple impacts

on MLB team and these organizations must be readily able to adapt to these changes. The

nature of this changing MLB workforce has been documented by several authors over the

past 22 years (Breton & Villegas, 1999; Jamail, 2008; Kelly, 2006; Klein, 1991; 2006;

Kurlansky, 2010; Marcano & Fidler, 2002; Wendell, 2003). As a result of this changing

workforce, MLB teams have had to adapt to an environment that existed on the periphery

of baseball until the early 1990s (Breton & Villegas, 1999; Klein, 1991; Marcano &

Fidler, 2002). However, while some teams have provided items in the Dominican and

the United States to help players adjust, with the Cleveland Indians providing educational

curriculum that includes earth science, math, geography, and other courses to better

educate their players and help them earn their high school diplomas and the New York

Mets introducing Dominican food at Spring Training and instituting a cultural diversity

program for all players and coaches in the Mets system, most of these changes are far

from altruistic. As noted by Ross Atkins, the Indians Director of Latin American

Operations, "It's a nice byproduct that we graduate Dominicans from High School, but

our focus is to make more complete baseball players. Their ability to learn is crucial in

their development as a baseball player. And a secondary benefit is that they have

something in life beyond baseball, should baseball not work out" (Baxter, 2006, p. 2).

Placing education secondary to baseball ability reinforces the perceived neocolonial

nature of MLB in the Dominican (Klein, 1991, 1994; Marcano & Fidler, 2002).

Furthermore, the neo-colonialist nature of the academies and the migration of Dominican

athletes to the United States for the sole purpose of playing baseball have created a

vicious cycle that has a deleterious impact on future of the young men that do not succeed

in baseball.

Contributing to the neocolonialization of Dominican baseball by MLB is the

continued elevated status of baseball in the culture of the Dominican Republic due to the

extreme poverty and limited career options for, even educated, Dominicans. Thus, the

chance to earn millions of dollars playing major league baseball in America remains an

attractive and sought after opportunity. This option was often preferred to the exclusion

of other opportunities (Brubaker, 1984; Klein, 1989, 1991, 2006; Macnow, 1986). In the

Dominican Republic, a third of the population lives in poverty and over 60 percent of

children drop out of high school (Baxter, 2006). Additionally, in the past 30 years, the

Dominican Republic has produced more baseball players per capita than any nation in the

world which has made the allure of MLB very real (Klein, 1989).  Under control of the

United States, "… baseball takes on the appearance of a benevolent, even helpful,

cultural institution" (Klein, 1989, p. 95). This leads to a system similar to elite level

collegiate athletics, where athletes place all their eggs in the sport basket and largely

ignore potential advancement through academically earned avenues. Sociologist Harry

Edwards, who, when addressing the issue of American blacks and sport, pointed out that

sport opportunities are not answers to societal problems. Edwards (1984) believed that the mass pursuit of sport by young men, at the expense of other options, cannot be justified because of the limited opportunities it provides, even if those opportunities look real and bountiful. On one hand,, Klein (2006) noted that the prospects have not been any better off staying in the Dominican, "In a country where only 29 percent of elementary school students go on to high school, it is not baseball that is responsible for this depressing underachievement" (p. 111). On the other hand, Klein (1994) does place some blame on the advent of the Dominican baseball academies:

> Before the advent of the academies, young men were expected to move up the ranks of Dominican baseball until they were noticed by professional Dominican teams, and eventually, by major league scouts. By flocking to the academy, by practicing their skills year-round as children, and by abandoning and/or de-emphasizing their educations in favor of playing baseball, these young men were, and are, in accord with the ideas of the North American outposts in their country (p. 194-5).

I believe the Dominicans reliance on MLB reinforces the neocolonial aspects of this endeavor. In this instance, the leaders of the colonized nation (The Dominican Republic) continually pay deference to the neocolonial "masters" (The United States and MLB) and ignore the issues of poverty, education, and independent economic development unaddressed (Nkrumah, 1975; Yew, 2002). By allowing MLB teams to sign Dominican players at a younger age than players native to the United States and most other countries across the globe, Dominican reliance on MLB money is reinforced. Therefore, addressing how the team selects players to enter the MLB system, why players want to enter the

MLB system, and developing an understanding of the expected difficulties these players will face from a player and administrative perspective is a preliminary step in addressing the larger neocolonial environment surrounding MLB and the Dominican Republic.

**Summary of Findings**

In the first paper of this research the various dimensions of talent identification by expert observers was analyzed through the theoretical lens of talent identification (Vrljic & Mallet) and glocalization (Guilianotti & Robertson, 2007). This theoretical framework allowed the global talent identification framework to encompass the four talent dimensions of physical skills, technical skills, cognitive-perceptual skills, and personal qualities within the four glocalization concepts of relativization, accommodation, hybridization, and transformation. In the analysis, it was also discovered that the administrators segregate the talent identification attributes along the ideals of teachable and natural abilities. Furthermore, certain talent identification measures utilized by the administrators were modified in some form to allow for the difference in environment between the United States and the Dominican. Some were slightly modified (i.e., genetic scouting, general physicality), while others were transformed (i.e., age determination). The acknowledgement that talent identification, even in the same sport was adjusted for environmental factors could play a role in the creation of more accurate talent identification models.

In the second paper in this study, the rationale for players wanting to migrate to the United States to play baseball was examined. The monetary benefits that could be earned by playing MLB baseball was an important motivator, however alternative reasons were discovered. Using the athlete migration motivations created by Magee &

Sugden (2002) it was found that, in addition to mercenaries, players desired to compete in foreign professional leagues due to a desire to play against the best (ambitionists) and to see other parts of the world (nomadic cosmopolitans. Furthermore, two additional sets of motivations of altrusists and lost boys were identified. The altrusists were composed of players that focused on what the money they earned from MLB could do for their families and communities and were driven by this goal. The lost boys appeared to be largely influenced by parental, peer, and societal pressure to pursue a career in baseball because they had shown early promise as a player.

The third paper addressed the difficulties that the players and administrators believed the players would face upon their initial migration to the United States. In order to outline these concepts, a framework developed by Schinke et al. (2011) which included challenges in a new community, challenges in a new culture, but outside of sport, and challenges in sport contexts was utilized. The challenges identified by both players and administrators of separation from family and friends, cultural adjustments, and the language barrier largely fit the pre-existing contexts. However, some players noted that they did not believe that anything would be difficult for them once they arrived in the United States. Given the pre-migration aspect of this study in comparison to the post-migration research previously conducted and the lack of cultural competency among many players, it was not surprising to have a faction of players who may have failed the difficulties of the migration process.

These three papers contribute to a greater understanding of the new global workforce in baseball. Specifically, how this workforce gains entry to the potential migrant pool (talent identification), continues with an analysis of the players' decision-

making process (migration rationale), and culminates with the players and administrators analyzing the difficulties of imminent migration (migration difficulties). The analysis provides a broad overview of the pre-migration process for Dominican baseball players and a jumping off point for future research in these areas, if not this same locale. A longitudinal examination of the phenomenon is important because to analyze whether the talent identification mechanisms continue to adjust to the Dominican environment or utilize new and improved technology, whether the rationale for player migration changes as a player is advanced or eliminated from the professional baseball systems, and whether teams begin to better prepare players for the migration difficulties they encounter and how long those difficulties last for the players.

**Recommendations for Future Research**

Based upon the findings and conclusion, there are several areas that were beyond the scope of this study. The primary recommendation is for the continued analysis of players as they move through the minor league baseball system and either dropout or compete in MLB. However, each of the areas addressed has additional considerations and pathways for future exploration. Each of the three papers will be addressed in turn.

**Talent Identification.**

Research in the talent identification area needs to move towards helping to determine more quantitative measures for talent identification. While some quantitative measures do exist (i.e., pitching and running speed), the current advances in technology allow teams to measure bat speed, hand-eye coordination, and other reactionary motions with a precision that was unavailable even at the turn of the century. The utilization of new technology into the talent identification process will hopefully yield more accurate

predictions by combining the analysis of the expert observers with the information provided by new technology. The ability to track the performance of the players based on expert observer evaluations and the technological measurements of performance could yield new predictive models which would allow teams to develop a decided advantage in the acquisition of new talent. Teams could also conduct research into the scouts' ratings of players from different ethnic backgrounds to determine if prejudices in regards to the four talent dimensions of physical skills, technical skills, cognitive-perceptual skills, and personal qualities (Vrljic & Mallet, 2008) reveal biases.

**Migration Rationale.**

Future research in the area of migration rationale could be conducted on the societal and familial pressures that are placed on the players pursuing migration. The typical player had more than one reason for migration. A survey instrument could be developed to identify a player's primary motivation for migration and to determine if the long-term success of the player is in anyway correlated to their migration rationale. Perhaps certain initial motivations drive a player to succeed in a way that other motivations do not. A longitudinal analysis of players throughout their careers could also be a helpful tool. Researchers could determine if the motives that the players believed initially drove them towards a specific career path remain constant as they progress along that  career path or are removed from that career path due to lack of ability or injury.

**Migration Difficulties.**

Future work on migration difficulties of Dominican baseball players could analyze the effectiveness of the current pre-migration strategies of MLB teams to determine their impact on mitigating the migration difficulties. The post-migration

adaptation classes that MLB teams utilize to assist players with the migration process

could also be analyzed. Given these findings, new or alternative methods for preparing

players for and supporting players experiencing the migration process could be

developed. Interviews and discussions with players throughout their careers could also

help teams develop different strategies for assisting players at various points in either

their professional career or their personal lives. The findings may help teams identify

personal player issues that will alleviate off-the-field stressors they may be experiencing

which would allow them to perform to their full potential on the field. When combined

with a modified talent identification process, these steps could further assist teams in

maximizing their player assets.

**The Future of Talent Identification and Athlete Migration**

The rise to prominence of the Dominican baseball player since the early 1990s

(Breton & Villegas, 1999; Jamail, 2008; Kelly, 2006; Klein, 1991; 2006; Kurlansky,

2010; Marcano & Fidler, 2002; Wendell, 2003) has forced teams to develop academies in

the Dominican Republic to remain competitive in the international labor market. The

development and operation of these academies also places pressure on the team

administrators to identify talented Dominican players and assist them in their passage

from the Dominican Summer League to Major League Baseball. Despite the sums of

money spent on "talented" players by MLB teams, little evolution has occurred at the

entry-level of talent identification to allow teams to make more empirically supported

decisions in this process (Lewis, 2003). This study and previous research focused on the

expert observers (Bartmus et al., 1987; Gulbin & Ackland, 2009; Kozel, 1996; Reilly,

Bangsbo & Franks, 2000; Vrljic & Mallett, 2008); however, teams must begin

developing ways to combine the skills of the expert observer with the technological

advances present in today's society.

Addressing the motivations and needs of these talented players as they move

through the professional baseball system is also an area that has become critical for

teams. Organizations have acknowledged the difficulties that occur during the migration

process (Agergaard, 2008; Bale, 1991; Bourke, 2002; Stead & Maguire, 2000; Ridinger

& Pastore, 2000; Schinke et al., 2011; Weedon, 2011), but limited resources are

dedicated to providing assistance to help these talented individuals as they navigate a new

system. The failure of teams to recognize or adequately prepare these talented individuals

for the circumstances in which they are placed has the potential to jeopardize the

financial investment made by the team due to its own malfeasance (Gennaro, 2007). The

aim for the future should be to develop appropriate mechanisms with which to identify

talented Dominican, or other international athletes, and assist the talented players in the

adjustment process to the United States.

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# APPENDIX A

**Section 1: General Academy Environment**

1. How would you describe the academy environment?

2. Is there anything you would change with the academy?

3. Do you feel players act differently when the American coaches are at the academy?

4. Would you change it in any way? How?

5. Do you think teams should rent or construct their own facilities?

    a. Why?

6. What is your perception of the buscones?

7. What would happen to baseball in the Dominican if the MLB draft included Dominican players?

8. What do you hope to get out of the English/cultural awareness program?

9. Do you like the schedule with 6 games and a day off, or would you rather have four games with two practice days and a day off?

    a. Do you think the players learn more in practice or in games?

10. What is your biggest concern with the Dominican academy?

    a. Why?

    b. Any other minor concerns?

**Section 2: Talent Identification**

1. Other than a pitcher's velocity and a player's 60-time, are there any other measureables that the team takes before offering a contract?

2. Does the team give the players a vision test before they sign?

3. How do you know when a player just doesn't have it, if it was a talent identification mistake, or that they're not receiving the proper coaching?

4. What is the most crucial factor in signing a player?

    a. What is the most crucial factor in releasing a player?

5. Do you think some scouts still have stereotypical ideas about Latin players?

6. Does the team give the players eye tests or depth perception tests?

7. What's the difference between the talent identification and development process for Dominican and players in the United States?

8. How big of a challenge is the birthdate issues in Dominican scouting?

9. What are the key elements you look for when analyzing a hitter?

    a. A pitcher?

10. What percentage of the players who are signed to play in the academy make it to the United States? A-ball? AA ball? AAA ball? MLB?

    a. Do you ever tell the players these numbers?

11. What is the biggest issue in identifying talent in the DR?

12. Do you provide any mental skills training for any players or prospects at any level?

13. Do any of the baseball academies run by buscones consistently develop quality talent?

    a. If so, what's the difference between these academies and others?

## Section 3: Migration

1. What do you believe is the most challenging area of adaptation for newly migrated Dominican players?

      a.  Why?

2. Area there any other areas that players consistently struggle with when they migrate to the United States?

3. What are some of the areas of struggle that players may not necessarily think of, but you have seen in the past?

4. What do you think the team could do to prepare players for the cultural change that they're going to experience?

5. How important is a basic grasp of English for Dominican players?

6. Do you think teams should do more in terms of instead of just English class and teach other subjects like history, math, science or geography?

7. What happens to players who don't make it?

      a.  Is that fair? Why?

# APPENDIX B

**Section 1: General Academy Environment**

11. How would you describe the academy environment?

12. Is there anything you would change with the academy?

13. How many tryouts did you have before you signed with the Twins?

    a. Were any extended tryouts?

14. Were you ever offered a contract before you signed with Minnesota?

    a. If so, why didn't you sign with that team?

15. What would you have done if you hadn't gotten signed by Minnesota?

    a. By any team?

16. How does having tryout guys constantly coming in to the academy looking to take your job feel?

    a. Does it bother you at all? Why? Why not?

    b. Is there a difference between the tryouts and the teammates?

17. Do you have any hesitancy in reporting your injuries?

18. What's the difference between the Dominican coaches and the American coaches?

19. Do you feel players act differently when the American coaches are at the academy?

20. Do you believe you have improved since you arrived at the academy?

21. What's the most difficult thing about being at the academy?

22. Has being in the academy changed your life?

**Section 2: Dominican Environment**

1. Please explain your perception of the academy environment in the Dominican.

2. Would you change it in any way? How?

3. Do you think teams should rent or construct their own facilities? Why?

4. What is your perception of the buscones?

5. How old were you when you started working with your buscone?

6. How did your buscone find you?

7. How much did you sign for?

    a. How much did you give your buscone?

8. What would happen to baseball in the Dominican if the MLB draft included Dominican players?

9. How many years did you attend school?

10. Do you like the Dominican Summer League or should players be promoted to the United States right away?

11. Were you in school before you entered the academy?

    a. Did you stop attending school to practice baseball?

    b. Would you have stayed in school if you hadn't signed or Why did you drop out?

    c. At what age did you drop out?

    d. At what age did you enter the academy?

12. Did you know anyone that was in an academy before you entered?

    a. Who? How?

**Section 3: Migration**

14. What percentage of players who sign Dominican Summer League contracts play MLB?

15. What do you think is the biggest obstacle for the Dominican players when they initially arrive in the United States?

    a. Why?

    b. Is there anything else that you think would be or that is difficult for them?

16. What have other players you know said was difficult for them when they arrived in the United States?

17. What do you think the team could do to prepare you for the cultural change that you're going to experience?

18. How important is a basic grasp of English for Dominican players?

19. Do you think teams should do more in terms of instead of just English class and teach other subjects like history, math, science or geography?

20. Why do you want to play MLB?

    a. Are there any other reasons?

21. What does playing MLB mean to you?

22. If you could play in the Dominican Winter League or MLB, which would you choose and why?

    a. If the pay was equal, and you could play in the Dominican Winter League or MLB, which would you choose and why?

23. What will be your biggest challenge when you are promoted to the United States?

    a. Why do you believe this will be difficult for you?

24. Will you play MLB? When?

25. Do you have any plans in case you do not make it to MLB?

    a. What are they?

    b. Why those alternatives?

26. What do you do when you have a family problem or a problem with your girlfriend when you're at the academy?

    a. How does that make you feel?

27. Have your relationships with your siblings changed at all? How?

28. Has your status in your neighborhood changed? How?

29. What happens to players who don't make it?

    a. Is that fair? Why?